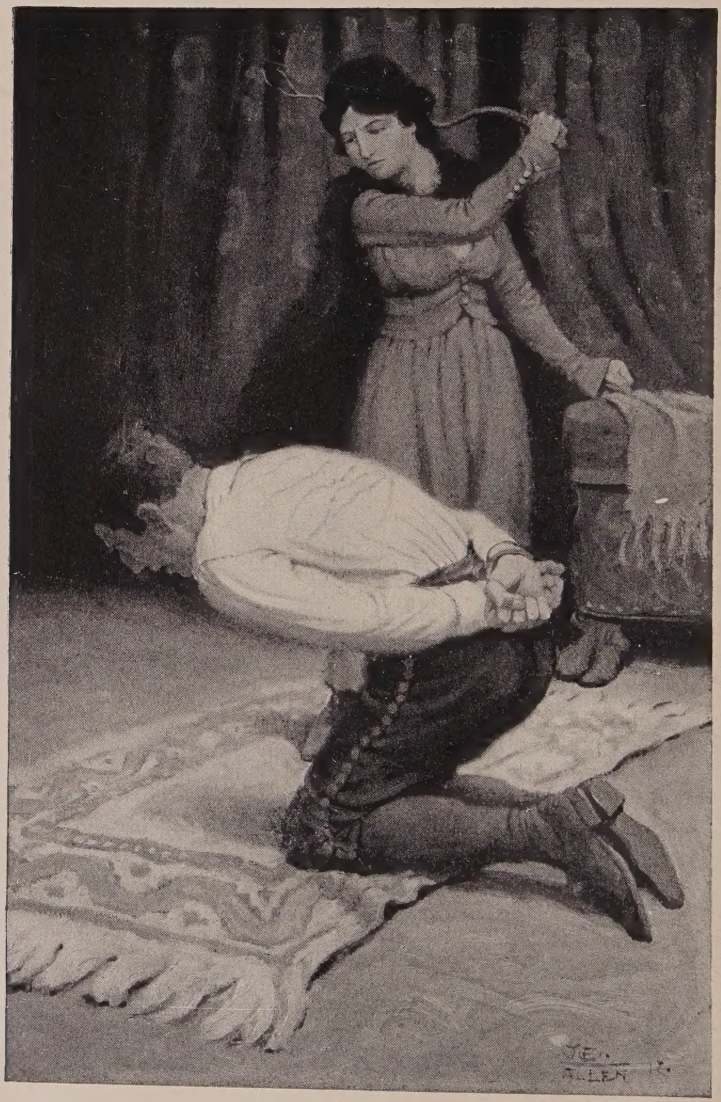

AT LAST THE POOR FOOL GROANED WITH PAIN.

Inclusive Edition

THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF
Guy de Maupassant

MAD
KIND GIRLS
ROOM 11
and other stories

Translations, Critical and Interpretative Essays by

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FRONTISPIECES BY J. E. ALLEN

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MAD

PART I

FOR days and days, nights and nights, I had dreamed of that first kiss which was to consecrate our engagement, and I knew not on what spot I should put my lips. Not on her forehead, that was accustomed to family caresses, nor on her light hair, which mercenary hands had dressed, nor on her eyes, whose curling lashes looked like little wings, because that would have made me think of the farewell caress which closes the eyelids of some dead woman whom one has adored, nor her lovely mouth, which I will not, which I must not, possess until that divine moment when Elaine will at last belong to me altogether and for always, but on that delicious little dimple which comes in one of her cheeks when she is happy, when she smiles, and which excited me as much as her voice did with languorous softness, on that evening when our flirtation began, at the Souverettes'.

Our parents had gone out, and were walking slowly under the chestnut trees in the garden, and had left us entirely alone for a few minutes. I went up to her and took both her hands into mine, which were trembling, and gently drawing her close to me, I whispered:

"How happy I am, Elaine, and how I love you!" and I kissed her almost timidly, on the dimple. She trembled, as if from the pain of a burn, blushed deeply, and with an affectionate look she said: "I love you also, Jacques, and I am very happy!"

That embarrassment, that sudden emotion which revealed the perfect spotlessness of a pure mind, the instinctive recoil of virginity, that childlike innocence, that blush of modesty, delighted me above everything as a presage of happiness. It seemed to me as if I were unworthy of her; I was almost ashamed of bringing to her and of putting into her small, saintlike hands the remains of a damaged heart, that had been polluted by debauchery, that miserable thing which had served as a toy for unworthy mistresses, which was intoxicated with lies, and felt as if it would die of bitterness and disgust.

PART II

How quickly she has become accustomed to me, how suddenly she has turned into a woman and become metamorphosed! Already she no longer is at all like the artless girl, the sensitive child, to whom I did not know what to say, and whose sudden questions disconcerted me.

She is coquettish, and there is seduction in her attitudes, in her gestures, in her laugh, and in her

touch. One might think that she was trying her power over me, and that she guesses that I no longer have any will of my own. She does with me whatever she likes, and I am quite incapable of resisting the beautiful charm that emanates from her, and I feel carried away by her caressing hands, and so happy that I am at times frightened at the excess of my own felicity.

My life now passes amid the most delicious of punishments, those afternoons and evenings that we spend together, those unconstrained moments when, sitting on the sofa together, she rests her head on my shoulder, holds my hands, and half shuts her beautiful eyes while we settle what our future life shall be; when I cover her with kisses and inhale the odor of all that soft fluffy hair that is as fine as silk, like a halo round her imperial brow. All this excites me, unsettles me, kills me, and yet I feel inclined to shed tears when the time comes for us to part, and I really only exist when I am with Elaine.

I can scarcely sleep; I see her rise up in the darkness, delicate, fair, and pink, so supple, so elegant with her small waist and tiny hands and feet, her graceful head and that look of mockery and of coaxing which lies in her smile, that brightness of the dawn which illuminates her looks, and when I think that she is going to become my wife, I feel inclined to sing, and to shout out my amorous folly into the silence of the night.

Elaine also seems to be at the end of her strength, has grown languid and nervous; she would like to wipe out the fortnight that we still have to wait, and so little does she hide her longing that one of her uncles, Colonel d'Orthez, said after dinner the other evening: "By Jove, my children, one would

take you for two soldiers who are looking forward to their furlough!"

PART III

I do not know what I felt, or whence those fears came which so suddenly assailed me, and took possession of my whole being, like a flight of poisoned arrows. The nearer the day approaches that I am so ardently longing for, on which Elaine will take my name and belong to me, the more anxious, nervous, and tormented by the uncertainty of the morrow I feel.

I love and I am passionately loved, and few couples start on the unknown journey of a totally new life and enter into matrimony with such hopes, and the same assurance of happiness, as we two.

I have such faith in the girl I am going to marry, and have made her such vows of love, that I should certainly kill myself without a moment's hesitation if anything were to happen to separate us, to force us to a *comme il faut* but irremediable rupture, or if Elaine were seized by some illness which carried her off quickly. And yet I hesitate, I am afraid, for I know that many others have made shipwreck, lost their love on the way, disenchanted their wives, and have themselves been disenchanted in those first essays of possession.

What does Elaine expect in her vague innocence, which has been lessened by the half-confidences of married friends, by semi-avowals, by all the kisses of this sort of apprenticeship which is a court of love? What does she possess? What does she hope for? Oh! to think that one is risking one's whole

future happiness at such a hazardous game, that the merest trifle might make a woman completely ridiculous or hopeful, and make an idolized woman laugh or cry!

I do not know a more desirable, prettier, or more attractive being in the whole world than Elaine; I am worn out by feverish love, and I wish every particle of her being to belong to me; I love her ardently, but I would willingly give half that I possess to have got through this ordeal, to be a week older, *and still happy!*

PART IV

My mother-in-law took me aside yesterday, while they were dancing, and with tears in her eyes she said in a tremulous voice:

"You are going to possess the most precious object that we possess here, and what we love best—I beg you to always spare the slightest unhappiness, and to be kind and gentle toward her. I count on your uprightness and affection to guide her and protect her in this dangerous life in Paris." And then, giving way to her feelings more and more, she added: "I do not think that you suppose that I have tried to instruct her in her new duties or to disturb her charming innocence, which has been my work; when two persons worship each other as you two do, a girl learns what she is ignorant of so quickly and so well!"

I very nearly burst out laughing in her face, for such a theatrical phrase appeared to me both ridiculous and doubtful. So that respectable woman had always been a passive, pliable, inert object, who

never had one moment of vibration, of tender emotion in her husband's arms, and I understood why, as I wasted time at the clubs, he escaped from her as soon as possible and formed other liaisons which cost him dear, but in which he found at least some appearance of love.

And that piece of advice, at the last moment, which was so commonplace and natural, and which I ought to have expected, enervated me and, in spite of myself, plunged me into a state of perplexity, from which I could not extricate myself. I remembered those absurd stories which we hear among friends, after a good dinner. What would be that last trial of our love for her and for me, and would that love which then was my whole life come out of the ordeal lessened or increased tenfold? And when I looked at the couch on which Elaine, my adored Elaine, was sitting, with her head half-hidden behind the feathers of her fan, she whispered in a rather vexed voice:

"How cross you look, my dear Jacques! Is the fact that you are to be married the cause of it? And you have such a mocking look on your face. If the thought of it terrifies you too much, there is still time to say *no!*"

And, delighted, bewitched by her caressing looks, I said in a low voice, almost into her small ear:

"I adore you; and these last moments that still separate us seem centuries to me, my dear Elaine!"

PART V

There were tiresome ceremonies yesterday and to-day, which I went through almost mechanically.

First, there is the *yes* before the mayor at the civil ceremony, like some everyday response in church, which one is in a hurry to get over, and which has almost the suggestion of an imperious law, to which one is bound to submit, and of a state of bondage, which will, perhaps, be very irksome, since the whole of existence is made up of chance.

And then the service in church, with the decorated altar, the voices of the choir, the solemn music of the organ, the unctuous address of the old priest, who marked his periods, who seemed quite proud of having prepared Elaine for confirmation, and then the procession of the vestry, the shaking hands, and the greetings of people whom you scarcely see, and whom you do, or do not, recognize.

Under the long tulle veil, which almost covered her, with the symbolical orange flowers on her bright, light hair, in her white dress, with her downcast eyes and her graceful figure, Elaine looked to me like a Psyche, whose innocent heart was vowed to love. I felt how vain and artificial all this form was, how little this show counted before the kiss, the triumphant, revealing, maddening kiss, which sealed our nuptial vow.

PART VI

Elaine loves me as much as I adore her.

She left her parental abode, as if she were going to some festivity, without once turning toward all that she had left behind, in the way of affection and recollection, and without even a farewell tear.

She looked like a bird which had escaped from its cage and does not know where to settle, which

beats its wings in the intoxication of the light, and which warbles incessantly. She repeated the same words, as if she were dazed, and her laugh sounded like the cooing of a pigeon, and looking into my eyes, with her eyes full of languor and her arms round my neck like a bracelet and with her burning cheek against mine, she suddenly exclaimed:

"I say, my darling, would you not give ten years of your life to have already got to the end of the journey?"

This question so disconcerted me that I did not know what to reply, and my brain reeled, as if I had been at the edge of a precipice. Did she already know what her mother had not told her? Had she already learned what she ought to have been ignorant of? And had that heart, which I used to compare to the Vessel of Election, of which the litanies of Our Lady speak, already been damaged?

Oh! white veils that hide the blushes, the half-closed eyes, and the trembling lips of some Psyche; oh! little hands which you raised in an attitude of prayer toward the lighted and decorated altar; oh! innocent and charming questions, which delighted me to the depths of my being, and which seemed to me to be an absolute promise of happiness, were you nothing but a lie, and a wonderfully well-acted piece of trickery?

But was I not wrong, and an idiot, to allow such thoughts to take possession of me and to poison my deep, absorbing love, which was now my only law and my only object, by odious and foolish suggestions? What an abject and miserable nature I must have, for such a simple, affectionate, natural question to disturb me so, when I ought immedi-

ately to have replied to Elaine's question, with all my heart that belonged to her:

"Yes, ten or twenty years, because you are my happiness, my desire, my love!"

PART VII

Elaine was still sleeping when I arose, and I did not choose to wait until she woke up. Her complexion was almost transparent, her lips were half-open, as if she were dreaming, and she seemed so overcome with sleep that I felt much emotion when I looked at her.

I drank four glasses of champagne, one after the other, as quickly as I could, but it did not quench my thirst. I was feverish, and would have given anything in the world for something to interest me suddenly and have absorbed me and lifted me out of that slough in which my heart and my brain were being engulfed, as if in a quicksand. I did not venture to avow to myself what was making me mad with grief, or to scrutinize the muddy bottom of my present thoughts sincerely and courageously, to question myself and to pull myself together.

It would have been so odious, so infamous, to harbor such suspicions unjustly, to accuse that adorable creature who was not yet twenty, whom I loved, and *who seemed to love me,* without having certain proofs, that I felt that I was blushing at the idea that I had any doubt of her innocence. Ah! Why did I marry?

I had a sufficient income to enable me to live as I liked, to play the gallant to beautiful women who pleased me, whom I chanced to meet and who

amused me, and who sometimes gave me unexpected proofs of affection, but I had never allowed myself to be caught altogether, and in order to keep my heart warm I had some romantic and sentimental friendships with women in society, some of those delightful flirtations which have an appearance of love, which fill up the idleness of a useless life with a number of unexpected sensations, with small duties and vague, subtle pleasures!

And was I now going to be like one of those ships which an unskilful turn of the helm runs ashore as it is leaving the harbor? What terrible trials were awaiting me, what sorrows and what struggles?

A humorous friend said to me one night in joke at the club, when I had just broken one of those banks which form an epoch in a player's life:

"If I were in your place, Jacques, I should distrust such runs of luck as that, for one always has to pay for them sooner or later!"

Sooner or later!

I half opened the bedroom door gently. Elaine was in one of those heavy sleeps similar to those that follow intoxication. Who could tell whether, when she opened her eyes and called me, surprised at not finding me, her whole being would not become languid, and suddenly sink into a state of prostration? I wanted to reason with myself, and bring myself face to face with those cursed suggestions, as one does with a skittish horse before some object that frightens it, and to evoke the recollection of every hour, every minute, of that first night, and to extract the secret from her.

Elaine's looks and radiant smile were overflowing with happiness, and she had the air of a con-

queror who is proud of his triumph, for she was now a woman, and we had at least been alone in this modernized country house, which had been redecorated and smartened up to serve as the frame for our affection! She hardly seemed to know what she was saying or doing, and ran from room to room in her light *negligée* dress of mauve crape, without exactly knowing where to sit, and almost dazzled by the light of the lamps that had large shades to represent rose leaves over them.

There was no embarrassment, no hesitation, no shamefaced looks, no recoiling from the arms that were stretched out to her; none of those delightful little pieces of awkwardness which show a virgin soul free from all perversion, in her manner of sitting on my knees, of putting her bare arms round my neck. She laughed nervously, and her supple form trembled when I kissed her, and she said things to me that were only suitable for being whispered, while a strange languor overshadowed her eyes and dilated her nostrils.

And suddenly, with a mocking gesture which seemed to bid defiance to the repast that was laid on a small table, cold meat of various kinds, plates of fruit and of cakes, the ice pail, from which the neck of a bottle of champagne protruded, she said:

"I am not at all hungry, dear; let us not eat until later; what do you say?"

She half turned round to the large bed, which looked white in the shadow of the recess in which it stood, with its two white, untouched, almost solemn pillows. She was not smiling any more; there was a bluish gleam in her eyes, like that of burning alcohol, and I lost my head. Elaine did not try to escape, and did not utter a complaint.

Oh! that night of torture and delight, that night which ought never to have ended!

I determined that I would be as patient as a policeman who is trying to discover the traces of a crime, that I would investigate the past of this girl, about which I knew nothing, as I should be sure to discover some proof, some important reminiscence, some servant who had been her accomplice.

And yet I adored her, my pretty, my divine Elaine, and I would consent no matter to what if only she were what I dreamed her, what I wished her to be, if only this nightmare would go and no longer rise up between her and me.

When she woke up she spoke to me in her coaxing voice. Oh! her kisses, again her kisses, always her kisses, in spite of everything!

Oh! to have believed blindly, to have believed on my knees that she was not lying, that she was not making a mockery of my tenderness, and that she had never belonged, and never would belong, to any one but me!

PART VIII

I wished that I could have transformed myself into one of those crafty, unctuous priests to whom women confess their most secret faults, to whom they intrust their souls and frequently ask for advice, and that Elaine would have come and knelt at the grating of the confessional, where I should press her closely with questions, and gradually extract sincere confidences from her.

Nowadays, as soon as I am by the side of a young

or old married woman I try to give our conversation a knowing turn; I forget all reserve, and I try to make her talk on the only subject that interests and holds me, to extract from her, if possible, a recital of her true heart feelings. Was she shy or bold in the presence of her husband on those first days of their married life? Some do not appear to understand me, blush, leave me as if I were some unpleasant, ill-mannered person and had offended them; as if I had tried to force open the precious casket in which they keep their sweetest recollections.

Others understand me only too well, scent something equivocal and ridiculous, though they do not exactly know what, make me go on, and finally get out of the difficulty by some subtle piece of impertinence and a burst of teasing laughter.

Two or three at most, and they were those pretty little upstarts who talk at random and brag about their vice, and whom one could soon not leave a leg to stand upon, were one to take the trouble, have related their impressions to me with ironical complaisance, and I found nothing in what they told me that reassured me, nor could I discover anything serious, true, or moving in it.

That supreme initiation amused them as much as if it had been a scene from a comedy; the small amount of affection that they felt for the man with whom their existence had been welded grew less and evaporated altogether—and they remembered nothing about it except its ridiculous and hateful side, and described it as a sort of pantomime in which they played a bad part. But these did not love and were not adored as Elaine was. They married either from interest, or that they might not remain

old maids, that they might have more liberty and escape from troublesome guardianship.

Foolish dolls, without either heart or head, they had neither that almost diseased nervosity, nor that requirement for affection, nor that instinct of love which I discovered in my wife's nature, and which attracted me at the same time that it terrified me.

Besides, who could convince me of my errors? Who could dissipate that darkness in which I was lost? What miracle could restore *all* my belief in her again?

PART IX

Elaine felt that I was hiding something from her, that I was unhappy, that, as it were, some threatening obstacle had risen up between her and me, that some insupportable suspicion was oppressing me, torturing me and keeping me from her arms, was poisoning and disturbing that affection in which I had hoped to find fresh youth, absolute happiness, my dream of dreams.

She never spoke to me about it, however, but seemed to recoil from a definite explanation which might make shipwreck of her love. She surrounded me with endearing attentions, and appeared to be trying to make my life so pleasant to me that nothing in the world could draw me from it. And she would certainly cure me, if this madness of mine were not, alas! like those wounds which are constantly reopening, and which no balm can heal.

But at times I lived again, I imagined that her caresses had exorcised me, that I was saved, that doubt was no longer gnawing at my heart, that I

was going to adore her again as I used to. I would throw myself at her knees and put my lips on her little hands, which she abandoned to me; I looked at her lovely, limpid eyes as if they had been a piece of a blue sky that appeared amid black storm clouds, and I whispered, with something like a sob in my throat:

"You love me, do you not, with all your heart, you love me as much as I love you; tell me so again, my dear love; tell me that, and nothing but that!"

And she used to reply eagerly, with a smile of joy on her lips:

"Do you not know it? Do you not see every moment that I love you, that you have taken entire possession of me, and that I only live for you and by you?"

And her kisses gave me new life, and intoxicated me, as when one returns from a long journey and had been in peril, and despairs of ever seeing some beloved object again, and one meets with a sort of frenzied embrace, and forgets everything in that divine feeling that one is going to die of happiness.

PART X

But these were only ephemeral clear spots in our sky, and the crises which accompanied them only grew more bitter and terrible. I knew that Elaine was growing more and more uneasy at the apparent strangeness of my character, that she suffered from it, and that it affected her nerves, that the existence to which I was condemning her in spite

of myself, that all this immoderate love of mine, followed by fits of inexplicable coldness and melancholy, disconcerted her, so that she was no longer the same, and kept away from me. She could not hide her grief, and was continually worrying me with questions of affectionate pity. She repeated the same things over and over again, with hateful persistence. She had vexed me, without knowing it? Was I already tired of my married life, and did I regret my lost liberty? Had I any private troubles which I had not told her of; heavy debts which I did not know how to pay? Was it family matters or some former connection with a woman that I had broken off suddenly, and that now threatened to create a scandal? Was I being worried by anonymous letters? What was it, in a word? What was it?

My denials only exasperated her, so that she sulked in silence, while her brain worked and her heart grew hard toward me; but could I, as a matter of fact, tell her of my suspicions which were filling my life with gloom and annihilating me? Would it not be odious and vile to accuse her of such a fall, without any proofs or any clue, and would she ever forget such an insult?

I almost envied those unfortunate wretches who had the right to be jealous, who had to fight against a woman's coquettish and light behavior, and who had to defend their honor that was threatened by some poacher on the preserves of love. They had a target to aim at; they knew their enemies and knew what they were doing, while I was wandering in a land of terrible mirages, was struggling in the midst of vague suppositions, and was causing my own troubles, and was enraged with her past, which

was, I felt sure, as white and pure as any bridal veil.

Ah! It would be better to blow my brains out, I thought to myself, than to prolong such a situation! I had had enough of it. I scarcely lived, and I wished to know all that Elaine had done before we became engaged. I wanted to know whether I was the first or the second, and I determined to know it, even if I had to sacrifice years of my life in inquiry, and to lower myself to compromising words and acts, and to every species of artifice, and to spend everything that I possessed!

She might believe whatever she liked, for after all I should only laugh at it. We might have been so happy, and there were so many who envied me, and who would gladly have consented to take my place!

PART XI

I no longer knew where I was going, but was like a train moving at full speed through a dense fog, and which in vain disturbs the perfect silence of the sleeping country with its puffing and shrill whistles; when the driver cannot distinguish the changing lights of the disks nor the signals, and when soon some terrible crash will send the train off the rails, and the carriages will become a heap of ruins.

I was afraid of going mad, and at times I asked myself whether any of my family had shown any signs of mental aberration and had been locked up in a lunatic asylum, and whether the life of constant fast pleasure, of turning night into day, and of fre-

quent violent emotions, that I had led for years, had not at last affected my brain. If I had believed in anything, and in the science of the occult, which haunts so many restless brains, I should have imagined that some enemy was bewitching me and laying invisible snares for me, that he was suggesting those actions which were quite unworthy of the frank, upright, and well-bred man that I was, and was trying to destroy the happiness of which she and I had dreamed.

For a whole week I devoted myself to that hateful business of playing the spy, and to those inquiries which were killing me. I had succeeded in discovering the lady's maid who had been in Elaine's service before we were married, and whom she loved as if she had been her foster sister, who used to accompany her whenever she went out, when she went to visit the poor and when she went for a walk, who used to wake her every morning, do her hair, and dress her. She was young and rather pretty, and one saw that Paris had improved her and given her a polish, and that she knew her difficult business from end to end.

I had found out, however, that her virtue was only apparent, especially since she had changed employers; that she was fond of going to the public balls, and that she divided her favors between a man who came from her part of the country and who was a sergeant in a dragoon regiment, and a footman, and that she spent all her money on horse races and on dress. I felt sure that I should be able to make her talk and get the truth out of her, either by money or cunning, and so I asked her to meet me early one morning in a quiet square.

She listened to me first of all in astonishment,

without replying yes or no, as if she did not understand what I was aiming at, or with what object I was asking her all these questions about her former mistress; but when I offered her a few hundred francs to loosen her tongue, as I was impatient to get the matter over and pretended to know that she had managed interviews for Elaine with her lovers, that they were known and followed, that she was in the habit of frequenting quiet bachelors' quarters, from which she returned late, the sly little wench frowned angrily, shrugged her shoulders, and exclaimed:

"What pigs some men are to have such ideas, and cause such an excellent person as Mademoiselle Elaine any unhappiness! Look here, you disgust me with your banknotes and your dirty stories, and I don't choose to say what you ought to wear on your head!"

She turned her back on me and hurried off, and her insolence, that indignant reply which she had given me, rejoiced me to the depths of my heart, like soothing balm that lulls the pain.

I should have liked to call her back to me and tell her that it was all a joke, that I was devotedly in love with my wife, that I was always on the watch to hear her praised, but she was already out of sight, and I felt that I was ridiculous and mean, that I had lowered myself by what I had done; and I swore that I would profit by such a humiliating lesson, and for the future show myself to Elaine as the trusting and ardent husband that she deserved; and I thought myself cured, altogether cured.

And yet I was again a prey to the same bad thoughts, to the same doubts, and persuaded that that girl had lied to me just as all women lie when

they are on the defensive, that she made fun of me, that perhaps *some one* had foreseen this scene and had told her what to say and made sure of her silence, just as her complicity had been gained. Thus I shall always knock up against some barrier, and struggle in this wretched darkness and this mire from which I cannot extricate myself!

PART XII

Nobody knew anything. Neither the Superior of the convent where she had been brought up until she was sixteen, nor the servants who had waited on her, nor the governesses who had finished her education, could remember that Elaine had been difficult to check or to teach, or that she had had any other ideas than those of her age. She had certainly shown no precocious coquetry and disquieting instincts at school that would begin the inevitable eclogue of Daphnis and Chloe over again.

However—oh! I felt it too much for it to be nothing but a chimera and a mirage—it was no pure girl who threw her arms round my neck so lovingly, and who returned my first kisses so deliciously, who was attracted by my society, who gave no signs of surprise and uttered no complaint, who appeared to forget everything when in my society. No, no, a thousand times no, that could not have been a pure woman.

I ought to have cast off that intoxication which was bewitching me, and to have rushed out of the room where such a lie was being consummated; I ought to have profited by her moments of amiable weakness, while she was incapable of collecting her

thoughts, when she would with tears have confessed an old fault, for which the unhappy girl had not, perhaps, been altogether responsible. Perhaps by my entreaties, or even perhaps by violence, in terror at my furious looks, when my features would have been distorted by rage and my hands clinched in spite of myself in a gesture of menace and of murder, I might have forced her to open her heart, to show me its defilement, and to tell me its sad love episode.

How do I know whether her disconsolateness might not have moved me to pity, whether I should not have wept with her at the heavy cross that we both of us had to bear, whether I should not have forgiven her and opened my arms wide, so that she might have thrown herself into them as into a peaceful refuge?

Who could tell me or come to my aid? Who could give me the proofs, the real, undeniable proofs, either that I was an infamous wretch to suspect Elaine, whom I ought to have worshiped with my eyes shut, or that she was guilty, that she had lied, and that I had the right to cast her out of my life and to treat her like a worthless woman?

PART XIII

If I had married when I was quite young, before I had wallowed in the mire of Paris, from which one can never afterward free one's self, for heart and body both retain indelible marks of it, if experiences had not disgusted me with belief in any woman, if I had not been weaned from supreme il-

lusions and surfeited with everything to the marrow, should I have these abominable ideas?

I waited almost until I was beginning to decline in life before I took the right path and sought refuge in port, before going to what is pure and virtuous, and before listening to the continual advice of those who love me. I passed too suddenly from those lies, from those ephemeral enjoyments, from that satiety which depraves us, from vice in which one tries to acquire renewed strength and vigor and to discover some new and unknown sensation, to the pure sentimentalities of an engagement, to the unspeakable delights of a life that was common to two, to that first communion which ought to constitute married life.

If, instead of becoming involved in an engagement and forming a resolution so quickly—I had been afraid that somebody else would be beforehand with me and rob me of Elaine's heart, or that I should relapse into my former habits—if, instead of lacking moral strength and character enough, in case I might have had to wait; if I had backed out without entering into any engagement and without having bound my life to that of the adorable girl whom chance had thrown in my way, it would surely have been far better. If I had waited, prepared myself, questioned myself, and accustomed myself to that metamorphosis; if I had purified myself and forgotten the past, as in those retreats which precede the solemn ceremony when pious souls pronounce their indissoluble vows, how much wiser I should have been!

The reaction had been too sudden and violent for such a convalescent as I was. I worked myself up, and pictured to myself something so white, so

virginal, so paradisiacal, such complete ignorance, such unconquerable modesty, and such delicious awkwardness, that Elaine's gayety, her unconstraint, her fearlessness, and her kisses bewildered me, roused my suspicions, and filled me with anguish.

And yet I know how all, or nearly all, girls are educated in these days, and that the ignorant, simple ones only exist in the drama, and I know also that they hear and learn too many things, both at home and in society, not to have the intuition of the results of love.

Elaine loves me with all her heart, for she has told me so time after time, and she repeats it to me more ardently than ever when I take her into my arms and appear happy. She must have seen that her beauty had, in a manner, converted me; that in order to possess her I had renounced many seductions and a long life of enjoyment; and perhaps she would no longer please me if she were too much of the little girl, and would appear ridiculous to me if she showed her fears by any entreaty, or gesture, or any sigh.

As the people in the South say, she would have acted the brave woman, and boasted, so that no complaint might betray her, and have imparted the wild tenderness of a jealous heart to her kisses, and have attempted a struggle, which would certainly have been useless, against those recollections of mine, with which she thought I must be filled, in spite of myself.

I accused myself so that I might no longer accuse her. I studied my malady; I knew quite well I was wrong, and I wished to be wrong. I measured the stupidity and the disgrace of such suspicions, and, nevertheless, in spite of everything, they

assailed me again, watched me traitorously, and I was carried away and devoured by them.

Ah! Was there in the whole world, even among the most wretched beggars that were dying of starvation, whom nature squeezes in a vise, as it were, or among the victims of love, anybody who could say that he was more wretched than I?

PART XIV

This morning Comte de Saulnac, who was lunching here, told us a terrible story of a physician who had drugged or hypnotized a farmer's young daughter, who had been sent to him as a patient, and how he had brutally assaulted her.

Before he had finished I noticed an evil look on Elaine's face such as I had never before seen, and with vibrating nostrils she exclaimed in a hard voice:

"To think that such a monster was not sent to the guillotine!" But unless Elaine was a monster of wickedness, unless she had no heart and knew how to lie and to deceive as well as a girl whose only pleasure consists in making all those who are captivated by her beauty play the laughable part of dupes, unless that mask of youth concealed a most polluted soul, if there had been any unhappy episode in her life, would not something visible, something disgusting, attacks of low spirits and of gloom and disgust with everything, have remained, which would have shown the progress of some mysterious malady, the gradual weakening of the brain, and the enlargement of an incurable wound?

She would have cried occasionally, would have

been lost in thought and become confused when spoken to; she would scarcely have taken any interest in anything that happened, either at home or elsewhere. Kisses would have become a torture to her, and would have only excited a fever of revolt in her inanimate being.

I fancy that I can see such a victim of inexorable Destiny, as if she were a consumptive woman whose days are numbered, and who knows it. She smiles feebly when any one tries to get her out of her torpor, to amuse her, and to instill a little hope into her soul. She does not speak, but remains sitting silently at a window for whole days together, and one might think that her large, dreamy eyes are looking at strange sights in the depths of the sky, and see a long, attractive road there. But Elaine, on the contrary, thought of nothing but of amusing herself, of enjoying life and of laughing, and added all the tricks of a girl who has just left school to her seductive grace of a young woman. She carried men away with her; she was most seductive, and loving seemed to be her creation. She thought of nothing but of little coquettish acts that made her more adorable, and of tender innuendoes that triumph over everything, that bring men to their knees and tempt them.

It was thus that I formerly dreamed of the woman who was to be my wife, and this was the manner in which I looked on life in common; and now this perpetual joy irritates me like a challenge, like some piece of insolent boasting, and those lips that seek mine and which offer themselves so alluringly and coaxingly to me make me sad and torture me, as if they breathed nothing but a lie.

Ah! If she had been the lover of another man

before marriage, if she had belonged to some one else besides me, it could only have been from love, without altogether knowing what she wanted or what she was doing! And now, because she had acquired a name by marriage, because she had accidentaly extricated herself from that false step and thought she had won the game, now she fancied that I had not perceived anything, that I adored her and possessed her absolutely.

How wretched I was! Should I never be able to escape from that night which was growing darker and darker, which was imprisoning me, driving me mad, and raising an increasing and impenetrable barrier between Elaine and me? Would not she, in the end, be the stronger, she whom I loved so dearly, would not she envelop me in so much love that at last I should again find the happiness that I had lost, as if it were a calm, sunlit haven, and thus forget this horrible nightmare when I fell on my knees before her beauty, with a contrite heart and pricked by remorse, and happy to give myself to her forever, altogether and more passionately than at the divine period of our betrothal?

PART XV

Even the sight of our bedroom became painful to me. I was afraid of it; I was uncomfortable there, and felt a kind of repulsion in going there. It seemed to me as if Elaine were repeating a part that some one else had taught her, and I almost hoped that in a moment of forgetfulness she would allow her secret to escape her, and pronounce some name that was not mine, and I used to keep awake,

with my ears on the alert, in the hope that she might betray herself in her sleep and murmur some revealing word, as she recalled the past, and my temples throbbed and my whole body trembled with excitement.

But when this was over and I saw her sleeping peacefully as a little girl who was tired with playing, with parted lips and disheveled hair, and measured the full extent of the stupidity of my hatred and the sacrilegious madness of my jealousy, my heart softened and I fell into such a state of profound and absolute distress that I thought I should have died of it, and large drops of cold perspiration ran down my cheeks and tears fell from my eyes, and I got up, so that my sobs might not disturb her rest and wake her.

As this could not continue, however, I told her one day that I felt so exhausted and ill that I should prefer to sleep in my own room. She appeared to believe me, and merely said:

"As you please, my dear!" but her blue eyes suddenly assumed such an anxious, such a grieved look that I turned my head aside, so as not to see them.

PART XVI

I was again in the old house, *and without her*, in the old house where Elaine used to spend all her holidays, in the room whose shutters had not been opened since our departure seven months ago.

Why did I go there, where the calm of the country, the silence of the solitude, and my recollections

irritated me and recalled my trouble, where I suffered even more than I did in Paris, and where I thought of Elaine every moment I seemed to see her and to hear her, in a species of hallucination?

What did her letters that I had taken out of her writing table, which she had used as a girl; what did her ball cards, which were stuck round her looking-glass, in which she used to admire herself formerly; what did her dresses, her dressing-gowns, and the dusty furniture whose repose my trembling hands violated, tell me? Nothing, and always nothing!

At table I used to speak with the worthy couple who had never left the mansion and who appeared to look upon themselves as its second masters, with the apparent good nature of a man who was in love with his wife and who wished only to speak about her, who took an interest in the smallest detail of her childhood and youth, with all the jovial familiarity which encourages peasants to talk, and when a few glasses of white wine had loosened their tongues they would talk about her whom they loved as if she had been their child, and at other times I used to question the farmers, when they came to settle their accounts.

Had Elaine the bridle on her neck as so many girls had? Did she like the country? Were the peasants fond of her, and did she show any preference for one or the other? Were many people invited for the shooting, and did she visit much with the other ladies in the neighborhood?

And they drank with their elbows resting on the table in front of me, uttered her praises in a voice as monotonous as a spinning wheel, lost themselves in endless, senseless chatter which made me yawn

in spite of myself, and told me her girlish tricks, which certainly did not disclose what was haunting me, the traces of that first love, that perilous flirtation, that foolish escapade which Elaine might have experienced.

Old and young men and women spoke of her with something like devotion, and all said how kind and charitable she was, and as merry as a bird on a bright day; they said she pitied their wretchedness and their troubles, and was still the young girl in spite of her long dresses, and fearing nothing, while even the animals loved her.

She was almost always alone, and was never troubled with any companions; she seemed to shun the house, hide herself in the park when the bell announced some unexpected visit, and when one of her aunts, Madame de Pleissac, said to her:

"Do you think that you will ever find a husband with your stand-offish manners?" she replied, with a burst of laughter:

"Oh! Very well, then, auntie, I shall do without one!"

She had never given a handle to spiteful chatter or to slander, and had not flirted with the best-looking young man in the neighborhood, any more than she had with the officers who stayed at the château during the maneuvers, or the neighbors who came to see her parents. And some of them even, old men whom years of work had bent like vine stocks and had tanned like the leather bottles which are used by caravans in the East, used to say, with tears in their dim eyes:

"Ah! When you married our young lady we all said that there would not be a happier man in the whole world than you!"

Ought I to have believed them? Were they not simple, frank souls, ignorant of wiles and of lies, who had no interest in deceiving me, who had lived near Elaine while she was growing up and becoming a woman, and who had been familiar with her?

Could I be the only one who doubted Elaine, the only one who accused her and suspected her, I who loved her so madly, I whose only hope, only desire, only happiness she was? May Heaven guide me on this bad road on which I have lost my way, where I am calling for help and where my misery is increasing every day, and grant me the infinite pleasure of being able to enjoy her caresses without any ill feeling, and to be able to love her as she loves me. And if I must expiate my old faults, and this infamous doubt which I am ashamed of not being immediately able to cast from me, if I must pay for my unmerited happiness with usury, I hope that I may be given to death as a prey, only provided that I might belong to her, idolize her, believe in her kisses, believe in her beauty and in her love, for one hour, for even a few moments!

PART XVII

To-day I suddenly remembered a strange evening which I spent when I was a bachelor at Madame d'Ecoussens', where all of us, some with secret and insurmountable agony and others with absolute indifference, went into one of the small rooms where a female professor of palmistry, who was then in vogue and whose name I have forgotten, had installed herself.

When it came to my turn to sit opposite to her,

as if I had been going to make my confession, she took my hands into her long, slender fingers, felt them, squeezed them, and triturated them, as if they had been a lump of wax which she was about to model into shape.

Severely dressed in black, with a pensive face, thin lips, and almost copper-colored eyes, and neither young nor old, this woman had something commanding, imperious, disturbing about her, and I must confess that my heart beat more violently than usual while she looked at the lines in my left hand through a strong magnifying glass, where the mysterious characters of some Satanic conjuring look appear and form a capital M.

She was very interesting, occasionally discovered fragments of my past and gave mysterious hints, as if her looks were following the strange roads of Destiny in those unequal, confused curves. She told me in brief words that I should have and had had some opportunities, that I was wasting my physical, more than my moral, strength in all kinds of love affairs that did not last long, and that the day when I really loved, or when, to use her expression, I was fairly caught, would be to me the prelude of intense sufferings, a real way of the Cross and of an illness of which I should never be cured. Then, as she examined my line of life, that which surrounds the thick part of the thumb, the lady in black suddenly grew gloomy, frowned, and appeared to hesitate to go on to the end and continue my horoscope, and said very quickly:

" Your line of life is magnificent, Monsieur; you will live to be sixty at least, but take care not to spend it too freely or to use it immoderately; beware of strong emotions and of any passional crisis,

for I remark a gap there in the full vigor of your age, and that gap, that incurable malady which I mentioned to you, in the line of your heart.''

I mastered myself, in order not to smile, and took my leave of her, but everything that she foretold has been realized, and I dare not look at that sinister gap which she saw in my line of life—*for that gap can only mean madness!*

Madness, my poor, dear, adored Elaine!

PART XVIII

I became as bad and spiteful as if the spirit of hatred had possession of me, and envied those whose life was too happy and who had no cares to trouble them. I could not conceal my pleasure when one of those domestic dramas occurred in which hearts bleed and are broken, in which odious treachery and bitter sufferings are brought to light.

I attended divorce proceedings, with their miserable episodes, with the wranglings of the lawyers and all the unhappiness that they revealed, and which exposed the vanity of dreams, the tricks of women, the lowness of some minds, the foul animal that slumbers in most hearts. They attracted me like a delightful play, a piece which rivets one from the first to the last act. I listened greedily to passionate letters, those mad prayers whose secrets some lawyer violates and which he reads aloud in a mocking tone, and which he gives pellmell to the bench and to the public, who have come to be amused or to be excited, and to stare at the victims of love.

I followed those proceedings where unfaithful-

ness was unfolded chapter by chapter in its brutal reality of things that had actually occurred, and for the first time I forgot my own unhappiness in them. Sometimes the husband and wife were there, as if they wished to defy each other, to meet in some last encounter; and pale and feverish they watched each other, devoured each other with their eyes, hiding their grief and their misery.

It seemed to me as if I were looking at a heap of ruins, or breathing in the odor of an ambulance in which dying men were groaning, and that those unhappy people were assuaging my trouble somewhat and taking their share of it.

I used to read the advertisements in the personal columns in the newspapers, where the same exalted phrases used to recur, where I read the same despairing adieus, earnest requests for a meeting, echoes of past affection, and vain vows; and all this relieved me, vaguely appeased me, and made me think less about myself—that hateful, incurable *I* which I longed to destroy!

PART XIX

As the heat was very oppressive and there was not a breath of wind, after dinner Elaine wanted to go for a drive in the Bois de Boulogne, and we drove in the victoria toward the bridge at Suresnes.

It was getting late, and the dark drives looked like deserted labyrinths and cool retreats where one would have liked to have stopped late, where the very rustle of the leaves seemed to whisper tempta-

tions, and there was seduction in the softness of the air and in the infinite music of the silence.

Occasionally lights were to be seen among the trees, and the crescent of the new moon shone like a half-opened gold circlet in the serene sky, and the green sward, the copses and the small lakes, which gave an uncertain reflection of the surrounding objects, came into sight suddenly, out of the shade, and the intoxicating smell of the hay and of the flower beds rose from the earth as if from a sachet.

We did not speak, but the jolts of the carriage occasionally brought us quite close together, and as if I were being attracted by some irresistible force, I turned to Elaine, and saw that her eyes were full of tears and that she was very pale, and my whole body trembled when I looked at her. Suddenly, as if she could not bear this state of affairs any longer, she threw her arms round my neck, and with her lips almost touching mine she said:

"Why do you not love me any longer? Why do you make me so unhappy? What have I done to you, Jacques?"

She was at my mercy, she was undergoing the influence of the charm of one of those moonlight nights which unstring women's nerves, make them languid, and leave them without a will and without any strength, and I thought that was she going to tell me everything and to confess everything to me, and I had to master myself not to kiss her on her sweet, coaxing lips, but I only replied coldly:

"Do you not know, Elaine? Did you not think that sooner or later I should discover everything that you have been trying to hide from me?"

She sat up in terror, and repeated as if she were in a profound stupor:

"What have I been trying to hide from you?"

I had said too much, and was bound to go on to the end and to finish, even though I repented of it ever afterward, and amid the noise of the carriage I said in a hoarse voice:

"Is it not your fault if I have become estranged from you? Shall I be the only one to be unhappy, I who loved you so dearly, who believed in you, and whom you have deceived?"

Elaine closed my mouth with her fingers, and breathing hard, with dilated eyes and with such a pale face that I thought she was going to faint, she said hoarsely:

"Be quiet, be quiet, you are frightening me—frightening me as if you were a madman."

Those words froze me, and I shivered as if some phantoms were appearing among the trees and showing me the place that had been marked out for me by Destiny, and I felt inclined to jump from the carriage and to run to the river, which was calling to me yonder in a maternal voice and inviting me to an eternal sleep, eternal repose, but Elaine called out to the coachman:

"We will go home, Firmin; drive as fast as you can!"

We did not exchange another word, and during the whole drive Elaine sobbed convulsively, though she tried to hide the sound with her pocket-handkerchief, and I understood that it was all finished *and that I had killed our love.*

PART XX

Yes, all was finished, and stupidly finished, without the decisive explanation, in which I should find strength to escape from a hateful yoke, and to repudiate the woman who had allured me with false caresses, and who no longer ought to bear my name.

It was either that, or else—who knows?—the happiness, the peace, the love which was not troubled by any evil afterthoughts, that absolute love that I dreamed of between Elaine and myself when I asked for her hand, and which I was still continually dreaming of with the despair of a condemned soul far from Paradise, and from which I was suffering, and which would kill me.

She prevented me from speaking; with her trembling hand she checked that flow of frenzied words which were about to come from my pained heart, those terrible accusations which an imperious, resistless force incited me to utter, and those terrified words which escaped from her pale lips froze me again, and penetrated to my marrow as if they had been some piercing wind.

In spite of it all, I was in full possession of my reason, I was not in a passion, and I could not have looked like a fool.

What could she have seen unusual in my eyes that frightened her? What inflections were there in my voice for such an idea suddenly to arise in her brain? Suppose she had not made a mistake, suppose I no longer knew what I was saying nor what I was doing, and really had that terrible malady that she had mentioned, and which I cannot repeat!

It seems to me now as if I could see myself in a mirror of anguish, altogether changed, as if my head were a complete void at times and became something sonorous, and then was struck violent, prolonged blows from a heavy clapper, as if it had been a bell, filling it with tumultuous, deafening vibrations from a kind of loud tocsin and from monotonous peals, that were succeeded by the silence of the grave.

And the voice of recollection, a voice which tells me Elaine's mysterious history, which speaks to me only of her, which recalls that initial night, that strange night of happiness and of grief, when I doubted her fidelity, when I doubted her heart as well as I did herself, passes slowly through this silence all at once, like the voice of distant music.

Alas! Suppose she had not made a mistake!

PART XXI

I must be an object of hatred to her, and I left home without writing her a line, without trying to see her, without wishing her good-by. She may pity me or she may hate me, but she certainly does not love me any longer, and I have myself buried that love, for which I would formerly have given my whole life. As she is young and pretty, however, Elaine will soon console herself for these passing troubles with some soul that is the shadow of her own, and will replace me, if she has not done that already, and will seek happiness in new environments.

What are she and her friends plotting? What will they try to do to prevent me from interfering

with them? What snares will they set for me so that I may go and end my miserable life in some dungeon from which there is no release?

But that is impossible; it can never be. Elaine belongs to me altogether and forever; she is my property, my chattel, my happiness. I adore her, I want her all to myself, *even though she be guilty,* and I will never leave her again for a moment. I will still cling to her petticoats, I will roll at her feet and ask her pardon, for I thirst for her kisses and her love.

To-night, in a few hours, I shall be with her, I shall go into *our* room, and I will cover the cheeks of my fair-haired darling with such kisses that she will no longer think me mad, and if she cries out, if she defends herself and spurns me, I shall kill her; I have made up my mind to that.

I know that I shall strike her with the Arab knife that is on one of the console tables in our room among other knick-knacks. I see the spot where I shall plunge in the sharp blade, into the nape of her neck, which is covered with little, soft, pale golden curls, that are the same color as the hair of her head. This knife attracted me so at one time, during the chaste period of our engagement, that I used to wish to bite it, as if it had been some fruit. I shall do it some day in the country, when she is bathed in a ray of sunlight, which makes her look dazzling in her pink muslin dress, some day on a towing path, when the nightingales are singing and the dragonflies, with their reflections of blue and silver, are flying about.

There, there I shall skillfully plunge it in up to the hilt, like those who know how to kill.

PART XXII

And after I had killed her, what then?

As the judges would not be able to explain such an extraordinary crime to themselves, they would, of course, say that I was mad; medical men would examine me and would immediately agree that I ought at once to be kept under supervision, taken care of, and placed in a lunatic asylum.

And for years, perhaps, because I was strong, and because such a vigorous animal would survive the calamity intact, although my intellect might give way, I should remain a prey to these chimeras, carry that fixed idea of her lies, her impurity, and her shame about with me, that would be my one recollection, and I should suffer unceasingly.

I am writing all this perfectly coolly and in full possession of my reason; I have perfect prescience of what my resolve entails, and of this blind rush toward death. I feel that my very minutes are numbered, and that I no longer have anything in my skull, in which some fire, though I do not quite know what it is, is burning, except a few particles of what used to be my brain.

Just as a short time ago I should certainly have murdered Elaine if she had been with me when invisible hands seemed to be pushing me toward her, inaudible voices ordered me to commit that murder, it is surely most probable that I shall have another crisis, and will there be any awakening from that?

Ah! It will be a thousand times better, since Destiny has left me a half-open door, to escape

from life before it is too late, before the free, sane, strong man that I am at present becomes the most pitiable, the most destructive, the most dangerous of human wrecks!

May all these notes of my misery fall into Elaine's hands some day, may she read them to the end, pity, and absolve me, and for a long time mourn for me!

(*Here ends Jacques's journal.*)

AN ARTIST'S WIFE

AH, Monsieur!" said the old juggler, "it is only a matter of practice and habit, that is all. One must, of course, have a little talent in that direction and not be butter-fingered, but what is chiefly necessary is patience and daily practice for long, long years."

His modesty surprised me all the more because he was the cleverest performer of the kind I had ever seen, though most of them are infatuated with their own skill. I had frequently seen him in some circus or other, or even in traveling shows, as had every one, performing the trick that consists of putting a man or woman with extended arms against a wooden target and in throwing knives from a distance between their fingers and round their head. There is nothing very extraordinary in it, after all, when one knows the tricks of the trade, and that the knives are not the least sharp, and stick into the wood at some distance from the flesh. It is the accuracy and the

rapidity of the throws, the glitter of the blades, the curve which the handles make toward their living aim which give an air of danger to an exhibition that has become commonplace and only requires very middling skill.

But here there was no trick and no deception and no dust thrown into the eyes. It was done in good earnest and in all sincerity. The knives were as sharp as razors, and the old mountebank planted them close to the flesh, exactly in the angle between the fingers, and surrounded the head with a perfect halo of knives, and the neck with a collar, from which nobody could have extricated himself without cutting his carotid artery, while to increase the difficulty the old fellow went through the performance blindfolded, his whole face being covered with a close mask of thick oilcloth.

Naturally, like other great artists, he was not understood by the crowd, who confounded him with vulgar tricksters, and his mask only appeared to them a trick the more, and a very common trick into the bargain. "He must think us very stupid," they said. "How could he possibly aim without having his eyes open?" And they thought there must be imperceptible holes in the oilcloth, a sort of lattice-work concealed in the material. It was useless for him to allow the public to examine the mask for themselves before the exhibition began. It was all very well that they could not discover any trick, but they were only all the more convinced that they were being tricked. Did not the people know that they ought to be tricked?

I had recognized a great artist in the old juggler, and I was quite sure that he was altogether incapable of any trickery, and I told him so, while ex-

pressing my admiration; and he had been touched, both by my admiration and, above all, by the justice I had done him. Thus we became good friends, and he explained to me, very modestly, the real trick which the crowd cannot understand, the eternal trick comprised in these simple words: "To be gifted by nature, and to practice every day for long, long years."

He had been especially struck by my saying that I believed him incapable of trickery. "Yes," he said to me; "quite incapable. Incapable to a degree which you cannot imagine. If I were to tell you! But where would be the use?"

His face clouded over and his eyes filled with tears, but I did not venture to force his confidence. My looks, however, were no doubt not as discreet as my silence, and begged him to speak, and so he responded to their mute appeal. "After all," he said, "why should I not tell you about it? You will understand me." And he added, with a look of sudden ferocity: "She understood it, at any rate!"

"Who?" I asked.

"My faithless wife," he replied. "Ah! Monsieur, what an abominable creature she was, if you only knew! Yes, she understood it too well, too well, and that is why I hate her so; even more on that account than for having deceived me. For that is a natural fault, is it not, and may be pardoned? But the other thing was a crime, a horrible crime."

The woman who stood against the wooden target every night with her arms stretched out and her fingers extended, and whom the old juggler fitted with gloves and with a halo formed of his

knives, which were as sharp as razors and which he planted close to her, was his wife. She might have been a woman of forty, and must have been fairly pretty, but with a perverse prettiness. She had an impudent mouth, a mouth that was at the same time sensual and bad, with the lower lip too thick for the thin, dry upper lip.

I had several times noticed that every time he planted a knife in the board she uttered a laugh, so low as scarcely to be heard, but which was very significant when one heard it, for it was a hard and very mocking laugh, but I had always attributed that sort of reply to some artifice which the occasion required. It was intended, I thought, to accentuate the danger she incurred and the contempt that she felt for it, thanks to the sureness of the thrower's hands, and so I was very much surprised when the old man said to me:

"Have you observed her laugh, I say? Her evil laugh, which makes fun of me, and her cowardly laugh, which defies me? Yes, cowardly, because she knows that nothing can happen to her, nothing, in spite of all she deserves, in spite of all that I ought to do to her, in spite of all that I *want* to do to her."

"What do you want to do?"

"Confound it! Cannot you guess? I want to kill her."

"To kill her because she has——"

"Because she has deceived me? No, no, not that, I tell you again. I have forgiven her for that, a long time ago, and I am too much accustomed to it! But the worst of it is that the first time I forgave her, when I told her that, all the same, I might some day have my revenge by cutting her throat, if

I chose, without seeming to do it on purpose, as if it were an accident, mere awkwardness——"

"Oh! So you said that to her?"

"Of course I did, and I meant it. I thought I might be able to do it, for, you see, I had the perfect right to do so. It was so simple, so easy, so tempting! Just think! A mistake of less than half an inch and her skin would be cut at the neck where the jugular vein is, and the jugular would be severed. My knives cut very well! And when once the jugular is cut—good-by! The blood would spurt out, one, two, three red jets, and all would be over; she would be dead, and I should have had my revenge!"

"That is true, certainly, horribly true!"

"And without any risk to me, eh? An accident, that is all; bad luck, one of those mistakes which happen every day in our business. What could they accuse me of? Accidental homicide, that would be all! They would even pity me, rather than accuse me. 'My wife! My poor wife!' I should say, sobbing. 'My wife, who is so necessary to me, who is half the bread-winner, who takes part in my performance!' You must acknowledge that I should be pitied!"

"Certainly; there is no doubt about that."

"And you must allow that such a revenge would be a very nice revenge, the best possible revenge which I could have with impunity?"

"Evidently that is so."

"Very well! But when I told her so, just as I have told you, only more forcibly, threatening her, as I was mad with rage and ready to do the deed that I had dreamed of, on the spot, what do you think she said?"

"That you were a good fellow, and would certainly not have the atrocious courage to——"

"Tut! tut! tut! I am not such a good fellow as you think. I am not afraid of blood, and that I have proved already, though it would be useless to tell you how and where. But I had no need to prove it to her, for she knows that I am capable of a good many things, even of crime, especially of a crime——"

"And she was not frightened?"

"No. She merely replied that I could not do what I said; you understand. That I could not do it!"

"Why not?"

"Ah! Monsieur, so you do not understand? Why do you not? Have I not explained to you by what constant, long daily practice I have learned to plant my knives without seeing what I am doing?"

"Yes; well, what then?"

"Well! Cannot you understand what she has understood with such terrible results, that now my hand would no longer obey me if I wished to make a mistake as I threw?"

"Is it possible?"

"Nothing is truer, I am sorry to say. For I really have wished to have my revenge, which I have dreamed of and which I thought so easy. Exasperated by that bad woman's insolence and confidence in her own safety, I have several times made up my mind to kill her, and have exerted all my energy and all my skill to make my knives fly aside when I threw them to make a border round her neck. I tried with all my might to make them deviate half an inch, just enough to cut her throat. I wanted to, and I have never succeeded, never. And always

the creature's horrible laugh makes fun of me, always, always."

And with a deluge of tears, with something like a roar of unsatiated and muzzled rage, he ground his teeth as he wound up: "She knows me, the jade; she is in the secret of my work, of my patience, of my trick, routine, whatever you may call it! She lives in my innermost being, and sees into it more closely than you do, or than I do myself. She knows what a faultless machine I have become, the machine of which she makes fun, the machine which is too well wound up, the machine which cannot get out of order, and she knows that I *cannot* make a mistake."

ON CATS

I WAS sitting, the other day, on a bench outside of my door, with the sun shining full upon me, a basket of blooming anemones in front of me, reading a book that had recently appeared, a good book, a rare thing, and also a delightful book, *Le Tonnelier,* by Georges Duval. A large white cat, which belonged to the gardener, jumped on my knees, by the shock of its impact closing the book, which I laid beside me, to caress the beast.

It was hot; the odor of young flowers, a shy, light, intermittent odor, floated in the air, and I also felt passing breaths of cold coming from those great white peaks that I saw in the distance.

But the sun was scorching, penetrating, with that heat which digs down into the earth and makes it alive, which splits the seeds in order to animate the sleeping germs within, and slits the buds, so that the young leaves may come out. The cat was rolling on its back, on my knees, with its paws extended, clawing the air, showing its pointed teeth inside of its lips, and its green eyes peeping out through

the slit of its half-closed lids. I patted and caressed the soft and nervous animal, supple as a piece of silk, gentle, warm, delicious, and dangerous. She was purring delightedly, and ready to bite, for she likes to claw, as well as to be caressed. She stretched and turned her neck, and when I stopped touching her, she sat up and passed her head under my raised hand.

I made her nervous and she made me nervous, too, for I both love and detest these charming and perfidious animals. It gives me pleasure to touch them, to pass my hand over their silky, crackling fur, to feel their warmth through the fine, exquisite texture of their coat. There is nothing softer than the warm and vibrant hair of a cat, and nothing imparts to the skin a more delicate, refined, and rare sensation. But this living coat makes my fingers itch with a strange and fierce desire to strangle the beast that I am caressing. I feel in her the inclination that she has to bite me and to tear me. I feel and I catch this inclination, like a fluid which she communicates to me; I catch it from this warm skin through the tips of my fingers, and it creeps along my nerves, along my limbs, up to my heart, up to my head; it fells me, it runs along my skin, and it makes me clinch my teeth. And all the while I feel at the tips of my ten fingers the light, lively tickling which penetrates and suffuses my body.

And if the beast begins, if she bites me or claws me, I take her by the neck, give a turn, and fling her away like a sling-stone, so quickly and so brutally that she never has the time to get even with me.

I remember that, even as a child, I loved cats, but yet with the brusque desire to strangle them in my little hands. One day I suddenly saw, at the far

end of the garden, on the edge of the woods, something gray that was rolling over in the tall grass. I ran down to see; it was a cat caught in a trap, that was strangling, with the death-rattle in its throat. It was twisting its body, clawing the earth round it, jumping up, and falling down; and then it began all over again, and its quick, hoarse breathing sounded like the noise of a pump, a dreadful noise that is still ringing in my ears.

I might have taken a spade and cut the trap; I might have run for our man-servant, or I might have gone to tell my father. But, no; I did not stir from the spot, and with beating heart and trembling and cruel joy I watched it die; for it was a cat. Had it been a dog I should have cut the wire string with my teeth, rather than let it suffer a moment longer.

And when the cat was dead, quite dead, and still warm, I went up to touch it and pull its tail.

Yet they are delicious, especially when, in caressing them, they rub against our skin, purr, and roll over us, looking at us with their yellow eyes which never seem to see us, and it is then that we feel the insecurity of their caresses, the perfidious egoism of their pleasure.

Women also give us this sensation, charming, gentle women, with clear and false eyes, who have chosen us in order to get a taste of love. With them, when they open their arms, with pursed-up lips, when one presses them close, with beating heart, when one tastes the sweet, sensual joy of their tender caress, one feels very well that one is holding a cat, a cat with claws and nails, a perfidious, sly, amorous, hostile cat, who will bite when she is tired of kissing.

All the poets have loved cats. Baudelaire has sung of them divinely.

" Les amoureux fervents et les savants austères

One day I had the strange sensation of having lived in the enchanted palace of the White Cat, a magical château, where ruled one of these sinuous, mysterious, troublous beasts, perhaps the only one of all the beings whose footfall one never hears.

It was last summer, on the same coast of the Mediterranean. There was a fierce heat at Nice, and I asked if the people here did not have somewhere in the mountain above a cool valley, where they could go for a breath of fresh air.

They told me of the valley of Thorence. I wanted to see it. I must first go to Grasse, the city of perfumes, of which I shall speak some day, describing how they make those essences and quintessences of flowers, which are worth up to two thousand francs a liter. I passed the evening and the night in an old hotel in the city, a second-class inn, where the quality of the food was as doubtful as the cleanness of the rooms. I left in the morning.

The route lay through the mountains, skirting deep ravines, with sharp, sterile, and wild peaks rising up on the sides. I was wondering to what a curious summer place I had been sent, and I was on the point of turning back to get to Nice that same evening, when I suddenly perceived in front of me, on a mountain which seemed to shut off the entire valley, an immense and splendid ruin, with its towers and crumbled walls outlined against the sky, a curious heap of a dead fortress. It was the remains of an ancient priory of the Knights

Templars, who formerly held sway in the country of Thorence.

Skirting this mountain, I suddenly discovered a long green valley, fresh and restful. In the bottom there were meadows, running water, and willows, and on the slope pines were climbing up to the sky.

Opposite the priory, on the further side of the valley, but lower, there stands the Château of Quatre Tours, which was built about 1530, and is still inhabited. Its architecture does not yet show any trace of the Renaissance.

It is a heavy and well-built pile of masonry, very strong in appearance, and flanked by four watch-towers, as its name indicates.

I had a letter of introduction to the owners of this manor, who would not let me go on to the hotel.

The whole valley, which is really delightful, is one of the most charming summer places that one can imagine.

I went first through a kind of salon, the walls of which are covered by old Cordova leather, then through another room, where, by the light of my candle, I caught a glimpse of old portraits of ladies on the walls, those pictures of which Théophile Gautier has said:

> "I love to see you in your oval frames,
> Yellow portraits of the beauties of old,
> Holding withering roses in your hands,
> As is fitting for century-old flowers."

Then I entered the room in which I was to sleep.

I turned to examine it as soon as I was alone. It was hung with old painted tapestries, showing pink towers against blue backgrounds, and large,

fantastic birds under foliage of precious stones.

My dressing-room was in one of the towers. The windows, which were cut large into the wall on the inside, sloped through the masonry, narrowing as they went out toward the daylight, being, in fact, nothing more than portholes, openings through which men on the outside were killed. I closed my door, lay down, and went to sleep.

And I dreamed; one always dreams somewhat of that through which he has passed during the day. I was traveling; I entered an inn, where I saw at a table before the fire a servant in gala livery and a mason, a curious fellowship, but which did not astonish me. They were talking of Victor Hugo, who had just died, and I took part in their conversation. I finally went to bed in a room whose door did not close, and suddenly I saw the servant and the mason tiptoeing toward my bed, armed with bricks.

I started out of my sleep, and it took me some minutes to collect myself. Then I recalled the events of the day before my arrival at Thorence, the *châtelain's* amiable reception. . . . I was about to close my eyes when I saw—yes, I saw in the darkness of the night, in the middle of my room, at about the height of a man's head, two fiery eyes looking at me.

I reached for a match, and while I was striking it I heard a noise, a slight, soft noise, like that of the dropping of a damp roll of cloth, and when I had made a light I saw nothing but a large table in the middle of the apartment.

I got up. I went through the two rooms, looked under my bed and into the closets, but found noth-

ing.

I thought, therefore, that I had continued to dream for a few seconds after being awake, and I went to sleep again, not without some difficulty.

Again I began to dream. This time, also, I was traveling, but in the East, the land that I love, and I came to a Turk who was living in the open desert. He was a splendid Turk; not an Arab, but a Turk, large, amiable, charming, dressed in Turkish fashion, with a turban and a whole assortment of silks on his back, a real Turk of the Théâtre Français, who made me compliments in offering me sweets, on a delicious divan.

Then a small negro boy led me to my room—so all my dreams finished there—a perfumed, sky-blue room, with skins on the floor, and before the fire —the idea of fire pursued me even to the desert— sat a scantily clad woman in a low chair, who was expecting me. .

She was of the most pure Oriental type, with stars on the cheeks, the forehead, and chin, immense eyes, an admirable body, a little brown but warm and captivating.

She looked at me, and I thought: "This is what I call hospitality. It is not in our stupid land of the North, our land of inept prudishness and odious shamefacedness and imbecile morality, where one would receive a stranger in this fashion."

I went up to her and spoke, but she replied only by signs, not knowing a word of my language, which my Turk, her master, knew so well.

All the more happy in that she would be silent, I took her by the hand and led her to my couch, where I lay down beside her. . . . But one always awakens just at that point! So I woke up, and I was not very much surprised to feel

something soft and warm under my hand, which I caressed amorously.

Then, on gathering together my thoughts, I saw that it was a cat, a large cat, snuggled up against my cheek, which slept undisturbed. I let it lie, and, following its example, went to sleep once more.

When day broke it was gone, and I really thought that I had been dreaming, for I did not understand how she could have come into my room and gone out again, the door being locked.

When I told my adventure (not all of it) to my amiable host, he began to laugh, and said: "He came in through the cat-hole," and, lifting up a curtain, he showed me a small, round black hole in the wall.

And I learned that almost all the old habitations in this country have such long, narrow passages through the walls, which go from the cellar to the garret, from the maid-servant's room to that of the master, and which constitute the cat the king and the master of the house.

He goes about as he likes, visiting his domain at his pleasure; he can sleep in all the beds, see everything and hear everything, know all the secrets, all the habits, and all the shame of the house. He is everywhere at home, and can enter everywhere, the animal that goes about noiselessly, the silent prowler, the midnight promenader of hollow walls.

And I thought of a stanza of Baudelaire's:

> "He is the homely spirit of the spot;
> As judge he sees us all, and doth inspire
> All things that pass in his domain;
> Perhaps he is a fay—perhaps a god."

COUNTESS SATAN

THEY were discussing dynamite, the social revolution, nihilism; and even those who cared least about politics had something to say. Some were alarmed, others philosophized, while others again tried to smile.

"Bah!" said N——, "when we are all blown up we shall see what it is like. Perhaps, after all, it may be an amusing sensation, provided one ascends enough."

"But we shall not be blown up at all," said G——, the optimist, interrupting him. "It is all a romance."

"You are mistaken, my dear fellow," replied Jules de C——. "It sounds like a romance, but with that confounded nihilism, everything seems like one, though it would be a mistake to trust to it. Take myself, for instance, the manner in which I made Bakounine's acquaintance . . ."

They knew that he was a good narrator, and it was no secret that his life had been an adventurous one, so they drew closer to him, and listened with interest. This is what he told them:

"I met Countess Nioska W——, that strange woman who was usually called Countess Satan, in Naples; I immediately attached myself to her out of curiosity, and soon fell in love with her. Not that she was beautiful, for she was a Russian who had all the bad characteristics of the Russian type. She was thin and squat at the same time, while her face was sallow and puffy, with high cheek-bones and a Cossack nose. But her conversation bewitched every one.

"She was many-sided, learned, a philosopher, scientifically depraved, satanic. Perhaps the word is rather pretentious, but it exactly expresses what I want to say; for, in other words, she loved evil for the sake of evil. She rejoiced in other people's vices, and liked to sow the seeds of evil, in order to see it flourish. And that on a fraudulent, on an enormous scale. It was not enough for her to corrupt individuals; she only did that to keep her hand in; what she wished to do was to corrupt the masses. By slightly altering it after her own fashion, she might have adopted the famous saying of Caligula. She also wished that the whole human race had but one head; but not in order that she might cut it off, but that she might make the philosophy of nihilism flourish there.

"What a temptation to become the lord and master of such a monster! And I allowed myself to be tempted and undertook the adventure. The means came unsought-for by me, and the only thing that I had to do was to show myself more per-

verted and satanical than she was herself. And so I played the devil.

"'Yes,' I said, 'we writers are the best instruments for doing evil, as our books may be bottles of poison. The so-called men of action only turn the handle of the *mitrailleuse* which we have loaded. Formulas will destroy the world, and it is we who invent them.'

"'That is true,' she said, 'and that is what is lacking in Bakounine, I am sorry to say.'

"That name was constantly in her mouth, and so I asked her for details, which she gave me, as she knew the man intimately.

"'After all,' she said, with a contemptuous grimace, 'he is only a kind of Garibaldi.'

"She told me, although she made fun of him as she did so, about his Odyssey of the barricades and of the hulks which made up Bakounine's legion, and which is, nevertheless, only the exact truth; his part as leader of the insurgents at Prague and then at Dresden; his first death sentence; about his imprisonment at Olmütz and in the casemates of the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul; in a subterranean dungeon at Schüsselburg; about his exile to Siberia and his wonderful escape down the River Amoor on a Japanese coasting vessel, by way of Yokohama and San Francisco; and about his final arrival in London, whence he was directing all the operations of nihilism.

"'You see,' she said, 'he is a thorough adventurer, and now all his adventures are over. He got married at Tobolsk and became a mere respectable, middle-class man. And then he has no individual ideas. Herzen, the pamphleteer of Kolokol, inspired him with the only fertile phrase that he ever

uttered: *Land and Liberty!* But that is not yet the definite formula, the general formula; what I will call the dynamite formula. At best, Bakounine would become an incendiary and burn down cities. And what is that, I ask you? Bah! A second-hand Rostopchin! He needs a prompter, and I offered to become his prompter, but he did not take me seriously.'

* * * * * * *

"It would be useless to enter into all the psychological details which marked the course of my passion for the Countess, and to explain to you more fully the attraction of curiosity which she offered me more and more every day. It was becoming exasperating, and the more so as she resisted me as stoutly as the shyest of innocents could have done; but at the end of a month I saw what her game was. Do you know what she had thought of? She meant to make me Bakounine's prompter, or, at any rate, that is what she said. But no doubt she reserved the right to herself—and that is how I understood her—to prompt the prompter, and my passion for her, which she purposely left unsatisfied, assured her that absolute power over me.

"All this may appear madness to you, but it is, nevertheless, the exact truth, and, in short, one morning she bluntly made the offer: 'Become Bakounine's soul, and you shall have me.'

"Of course I accepted, for it was too fantastically strange to refuse; don't you think so? What an adventure! What luck! A number of letters between the Countess and Bakounine prepared the way; I was introduced to him at his house, and they discussed me there. I became a sort of Western

prophet, a mystic charmer who was ready to annihilate the Latin races, the Saint Paul of the new religion of nothingness; and at last a day was fixed for us to meet in London. He lived in a small one-storied house in Pimlico, with a tiny garden in front, and nothing remarkable about it.

"We were first of all shown into the ordinary parlor of all English homes, and then upstairs. The room into which the Countess and I were ushered was small and very badly furnished, with a square table with writing materials on it in the center of the room. That was his sanctuary; the deity soon appeared, and I saw him in flesh and bone; especially in flesh, for he was enormously stout. His broad face, with prominent cheek-bones, in spite of the fat; his nose like a double funnel, and his small, sharp eyes, which had a magnetic look, proclaimed the Tartar, the old Turanian blood which produced the Attilas, the Gengis-Khans, the Tamerlanes. The obesity which is characteristic of the nomad races, who are always on horseback or driving, added to his Asiatic look. The man was certainly not a European, a slave, a descendant of the deistic Aryans, but a descendant of the atheistic hordes who had several times already almost overrun Europe, and who, instead of any ideas of progress, have the belief in nihilism at the bottom of their heart.

"I was astonished, for I had not expected that the majesty of a whole race could be thus revived in a man, and my stupefaction increased after an hour's conversation. I could quite understand why such a Colossus had not wished for the Countess as his Egeria; she was a mere silly child to have dreamed of acting such a part to such a thinker. She had not felt the profoundness of the horrible

philosophy which was hidden under that material activity, nor had she seen the prophet under that man of the barricades. Or, perhaps, he had not thought it advisable to reveal himself to her; but he revealed himself to me, and inspired me with terror.

"A prophet? Oh, yes! He thought himself an Attila, and foresaw the consequences of his revolution; it was not only from instinct but also from theory that he urged a nation on to nihilism. The phrase is not his, but Tourgueneff's, I believe, but the idea certainly belongs to him. He got his program of agricultural communism from Herzen, and his destructive radicalism from Pougatcheff, but he did not stop there. I mean that he went on to evil for the sake of evil. Herzen wished for the happiness of the Slav peasant; Pougatcheff wanted to be elected Emperor, but all that Bakounine wanted was to overthrow the actual order of things, no matter by what means, and to replace the social order by a universal upheaval.

"It was the dream of a Tartar; it was true nihilism pushed to its extreme practical conclusion. It was, in a word, the applied philosophy of chance, the indeterminate aim of anarchy. Monstrous it may be, but grand in its monstrosity.

"And you must note that the man of action so despised by the Countess became in Bakounine the gigantic dreamer whom I have just shown to you, and his dream did not remain a dream, but began to be realized. It was through Bakounine's efforts that the nihilistic party became an organization, an organization comprising all forms of opinion, but on the whole a formidable organization, whose advance guard is true nihilism, the object of which is nothing less than to destroy the Western world,

to see it blossom from under the ruins of a general dispersion, which is the last conception of modern Tartarism.

"I never saw Bakounine again, for the Countess's conquest would have been too dearly bought by any attempt to act a comedy with this Old Man of the Mountains. And, besides that, after this visit, poor Countess Satan appeared to me quite silly. Her famous Satanism was nothing but the flicker of a spirit-lamp, and she had certainly had not shown much intelligence when she could not understand that prodigious monster. And as she had attracted me only by her intellect and her perversity, I was disgusted as soon as she laid aside that mask. I left her without telling her of my intention, and never saw her again.

"No doubt they both took me for a spy from the Third Section of the Imperial Chancellery. In that case, they must have thought me very strong to have resisted, and all I have to do is to beware, if any affiliated members of their society should happen to recognize me! . . ."

Then he smiled and, turning to the waiter who had just come in, he said: "Meanwhile, open us another bottle of champagne, and make the cork pop! It will, at any rate, somewhat accustom us to the day when we ourselves shall all be blown up with dynamite."

CRASH

LOVE is stronger than death, and consequently, also, than the greatest financial catastrophe.

A young and by no means bad-looking son of Palestine, and one of the barons of the Almanac of the Ghetto, who had left the field covered with wounds in the last general engagement on the Stock Exchange, used to go very frequently to the Universal Exhibition in Vienna in 1873, in order to divert his thoughts, and to console himself amid the varied scenes and the numerous objects of attraction there. One day he met in the Russian section a newly married couple, who had a very old coat-of-arms, but on the other hand a very modest income.

This latter circumstance had frequently emboldened the stockbroker to make secret overtures to the delightful little lady, overtures which might have fascinated certain Viennese actresses, but

which were sure to insult a respectable woman. The Baroness, whose name appeared in the Almanach de Gotha, therefore felt something very like hatred for the man from the Ghetto, and for a long time her pretty little head had been full of various plans of revenge.

The stockbroker, who was really and even passionately in love with her, got close to her in the Exhibition buildings, which he could do all the more easily, since the little woman's husband had taken to flight, foreseeing mischief, as soon as she went up to the showcase of a Russian fur dealer, before which she remained standing in rapture.

"Do look at that lovely fur," the Baroness said, while her dark eyes expressed her pleasure; "I must have it."

But she looked at the white ticket on which the price was marked.

"Four thousand roubles," she said in despair; "that is about six thousand florins."

"Certainly," he replied, "but what of that? It is a sum not worth mentioning in the presence of such a charming lady."

"But my husband is not in a position——"

"Be less cruel than usual for once," the man from the Ghetto said to the young woman in a low voice, "and allow me to lay this sable skin at your feet."

"I presume that you are joking."

"Not I——"

"I think you must be joking, as I cannot think that you intend to insult me."

"But, Baroness, I love you——"

"That is one reason more why you should not make me angry."

"But——"

"Oh! I am in such a rage," the energetic little woman said; "I could flog you as the 'Venus in Fur' flogged her slave."

"Let me be your slave," the Stock Exchange Baron replied ardently, "and I will gladly put up with everything from you. Really, in this sable cloak, and with a whip in your hand, you would make a most lovely picture of the heroine of that story."

The Baroness looked at the man for a moment with a peculiar smile.

"Then if I were to listen to you favorably, you would let me flog you?" she said after a pause.

"With pleasure."

"Very well," she replied quickly. "You will let me give you twenty-five cuts with a whip, and may command me after the twenty-fifth blow."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Fully."

The man from the Ghetto took her hand and pressed it ardently to his lips.

"When may I come?"

"To-morrow evening at eight o'clock."

"And I may bring the sable cloak and the whip with me?"

"No, I will see about that myself."

The next evening the enamored stockbroker came to the house of the charming little Baroness, and found her alone, lying on a couch, wrapped in a dark fur, while she held a dog whip in her small hand, which the man from the Ghetto kissed.

"You know our agreement," she began.

"Of course I do," the Stock Exchange Baron replied. "I am to allow you to give me twenty-

five cuts with the whip, and after the twenty-fifth you will listen to me."

"Yes, but I am going to tie your hands first."

The amorous Baron quietly allowed this new Delilah to tie his hands behind him, and then at her bidding, he knelt down before her, and she raised her whip and hit him hard.

"Oh! That hurts me most confoundedly," he exclaimed.

"I mean it to hurt you," she said, with a mocking laugh, and went on thrashing him without mercy. At last the poor fool groaned with pain, but he consoled himself with the thought that each blow brought him nearer to his happiness.

At the twenty-fourth cut she stopped.

"That only makes twenty-four," the beaten would-be Don Juan remarked.

"I will make you a present of the twenty-fifth," she said, with a laugh.

"And now you are mine, altogether mine," he exclaimed ardently.

"What are you thinking of?"

"Have I not let you beat me?"

"Certainly; but I promised you to grant your wish after the twenty-fifth blow, and you have only received twenty-four," the cruel little bit of virtue cried, "and I have witnesses to prove it."

With these words she drew back the curtains over the door, and her husband, followed by two other gentlemen, came out of the next room, smiling. For a moment the stockbroker remained speechless on his knees before the beautiful woman; then he gave a deep sigh, and sadly uttered that one most significant word:

"Crash!"

A DEER PARK IN THE PROVINCES

A HUNGARIAN Prince in an Austrian cavalry regiment was stationed, not long ago, in a wealthy Austrian garrison town. The ladies of the local aristocracy naturally did everything they could to ensnare the newcomer, who was young, good-looking, animated, and amusing, and at last one of the mature beauties, who was now resting on her laurels, after innumerable victories in the fervid atmosphere of Viennese society, succeeded in taking him in her toils, but only for a short time, for she had very nearly reached the age where, on the man's side, love ceases and esteem begins. But she had more sense than most women, and she recognized the fact in good time; and, as she did not wish to give up so easily the leading rôle which she played in society, she reflected as to what means she could employ to bind him to her in another manner. It is well known that the notorious Marquise de Pompadour, who was one of the mistresses of Louis XV of France, when her

own charms did not suffice to fetter that changeable monarch, conceived the idea of securing the chief power in the State and in society for herself by having a pavilion in the deer park which belonged to her, and where Louis XV was in the habit of hunting, fitted up with every accommodation of a harem, where she brought beautiful women and girls of all ranks of life to the arms of her royal lover.

Inspired by that historical example, the Baroness began to arrange evening parties, balls, and private theatricals in the winter, and in the summer excursions into the country, and thus she gave the Prince, who at that time was still, so to say, at her feet, the opportunity of plucking fresh flowers. But even this clever expedient did not avail in the long run, for beautiful women were scarce in that provincial town, and the few which the local aristocracy could produce were not able to offer the Prince any fresh attractions, when he had made their closer acquaintance. At last, therefore, he turned his back on the highborn Messalinas, and began to bestow marked attention on the pretty women and girls of the middle classes, either in the streets or when he was in his box at the theater.

There was one girl in particular, the daughter of a well-to-do merchant, who was supposed to be the most beautiful girl in the capital, on whom his opera-glass was constantly leveled, and whom he even followed occasionally without being noticed. But Baroness Pompadour soon got wind of this unprincely taste, and determined to do everything in her power to keep her lover and the whole nobility, which was threatened by such an unheard-of disgrace as an intrigue of a Prince with a girl of the middle classes.

"It is really sad," the outraged Baroness once said to me, "that in these days princes and monarchs choose their favorites only from the stage, or even from the scum of the people. But it is the fault of our ladies themselves. They mistake their vocation! Ah! Where are those delightful times when the daughters of the first families looked upon it as an honor to become their Princes' mistresses?" Consequently, the horror of the blue-blooded aristocratic lady was intense when the Prince, in his usual amiable, careless manner, suggested to her to people her deer park with girls of the lower orders.

"It is a ridiculous prejudice," the Prince said on that occasion, "which obliges us to shut ourselves off from the other ranks, and to confine ourselves altogether to our own circle, for monotony and boredom are the inevitable consequences of it. How many honorable men of sense and education, and especially how many charming women and girls, there are, who do not belong to the aristocracy, who would infuse fresh life and a new charm into our dull, listless society! I very much wish that a lady like you would make a beginning, and would give up this exclusiveness, which cannot be maintained in these days, and would enrich our circle with the charming daughters of middle-class families."

A wish of the Prince's was as good as a command; so the Baroness made a wry face, but she accommodated herself to circumstances, and promised to invite some of the prettiest girls of the plebeians to a ball in a few days. She really issued a number of invitations, and even condescended to drive to the house of each of them in person. "But

I must ask one thing of you," she said to each of the pretty girls, " and that is to come dressed as simply as possible; wash muslins will be best. The Prince dislikes all finery and ostentation, and he would be very vexed with me if I were the cause of any extravagance on your part."

The great day arrived; it was quite an event for the little town, and all classes of society were in a state of the greatest excitement. The pretty plebeian girls, with her whom the Prince had first noticed at their head, appeared in all their innocence, in plain wash dresses, according to the Prince's orders, with their hair plainly dressed and without any ornaments except their own fresh, buxom charms. When they were all captives in the den of the proud, aristocratic lioness, the poor little mice were very much terrified when suddenly the aristocratic ladies came into the ballroom, rustling in a sea of silk and lace, with their haughty heads changed into so many hanging gardens of Semiramis, loaded with all the treasures of India and radiant as the sun.

At first the poor girls looked down in shame and confusion, and Baroness Pompadour's eyes glistened with all the joy of triumph, but her ill-natured pleasure did not last long, for the intrigue on which the Prince's ignoble passions were to be shipwrecked recoiled on the highborn lady patroness of the deer park.

It was not the aristocratic ladies in their magnificent toilets that threw the girls of the middle class into the shade, but, on the contrary, those pretty girls in their wash dresses, who with the plain but splendid ornament of their abundant hair looked far more charming than they would have

done in silk dresses with long trains, and with flowers in their hair, and the novelty and unwontedness of their appearance there, allured not only the Prince, but all the other gentlemen and officers, so that the proud granddaughters of the lions, griffins, and eagles were quite neglected by the gentlemen, who danced almost exclusively with the pretty girls of the middle class.

The faded lips of the baronesses and countesses uttered many a "For shame!" but all in vain; neither was it any use for the Baroness to make up her mind that she would never again put a social medley before the Prince in her drawing-room, for he had seen through her intrigue, and gave her up altogether. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

She, however consoled herself as best she could.

A FASHIONABLE WOMAN

ALTHOUGH it is easy to show that Austria is far richer in men of genius in every domain than Northern Germany, yet, lacking any special technical training, very few of them become more than mere *dilettanti.* They receive, however, the same systematic military education for their chosen vocation as do the Prussian soldiers.

Leo Wolfram was one of those intellectual *dilettanti,* and the more pleasure one took in his material characters, which were usually taken bodily from real life, and in a certain political, and what is still more, in a plastic plot, the more he was obliged to regret that he had never learned to compose, or to delineate character, or to write; in one word, that he had never become a literary artist. That he had in him the making of a master in the art of narration is proved by his *Dissolving Views* and by his *Goldkind.*

Goldkind, the heroine, is a striking type of our modern society, and the novel contains all the elements of a classic novel, although in a crude, unfinished state. How exactly Leo Wolfram portrayed the conditions of our society is shown in the following reminiscences in which an Austrian woman plays the chief part.

It may be about ten years ago that every day four stylishly dressed persons, who caused much comment there and elsewhere, dined at a table in one corner of the small dining-room of one of the best hotels in Vienna. They were an Austrian landowner, his charming wife, and two young diplomatists, one of whom came from the North while the other was a son of the South. There was no doubt that the lady was the center of general interest.

The practised and discriminating observer of human nature easily recognized in her one of those characters which Goethe has so aptly named "enigmatical." They are always dissatisfied and at variance with themselves and the world, are a riddle to themselves, and can never be relied on. With these interesting and captivating, though unfortunate, contradictions in her nature, she made a strong impression on everybody, even by her mere outward appearance. She was one of those women who are called beautiful, without being really so. Her face, as well as her figure, was lacking in esthetic lines, but there was no doubt that, in spite of that, or perhaps on that very account, she was the most dangerous, fascinating woman that one could imagine.

She was tall and thin, with a certain hardness about her figure which became a charm through the vivacity and grace of her movements; her features harmonized with her figure, for she had a high,

clever, cold forehead, a strong mouth with sensual lips, and an angular, sharp chin, the effect of which was, however, diminished by her slightly tilted small nose, her beautifully arched eyebrows, and her large, animated, liquid blue eyes.

In her face, which was almost too expressive for a woman, there was as much feeling, kindness, and candor as there was calculation, coolness, and deceit, and when she was angry and drew her upper lip up, so as to show her dazzlingly white teeth, it had even a devilish look of wickedness and cruelty. She had strikingly beautiful long chestnut hair, which she wore braided and wound like a coronet on top of her head. Besides this, she was remarkable for her elegant taste in dress and a bearing which combined with the dignity of a lady of rank that undefinable something which makes actresses and women of the higher *demi-monde* so interesting to us.

In Paris her respectability would have been questioned, but in Vienna the best drawing-rooms were open to her, and she was not looked upon as more or as less respectable than any other aristocratic beauties.

Her husband decidedly belonged to that class of men whom that witty writer, Balzac, so delightfully calls *les hommes prédestinés* in his *Physiologie du Mariage*. Without doubt he was a very good-looking man, but he bore that stamp of insignificance which so often conceals coarseness and vulgarity, and was one of those men who, in the long run, become unendurable to a woman of refined tastes. He had a good private income, but his wife understood the art of enjoying life, and a deficit in the yearly accounts of the young couple became the rule, with-

out causing the lively lady to check her aristocratic tastes in the least on that account; she kept horses and carriages, was a fine horsewoman, had her box at the opera, and gave delightful little suppers, which at that time was the highest aim of a Viennese woman of her class.

One of the two young diplomats who accompanied her, a young Count belonging to a well-known family in North Germany, a gentleman in the highest sense of the word, was looked upon as her devoted admirer, while the other, who was his most intimate friend in spite of his ancient name and his position as *attaché* of a foreign legation, gave people that vivid impression that he was an adventurer which makes the police keep such a careful eye on some persons; he had also the reputation of being an unscrupulous and dangerous duelist. Short, thin, with a yellow complexion, with strongly marked but interesting features, an aquiline nose, and bright dark eyes, he was the typical picture of an unscrupulous flirt and duelist.

The handsome woman appeared to be *éprise* with the Count, and to take an interest in his friend; at least that was the construction that the others in the dining-room put upon the situation, as far as could be construed from the behavior and looks of the people concerned, and especially from their looks, for the beautiful woman's blue eyes rested on the Count with affection and ardor, and on the Italian from time to time with wild, diabolical sympathy, and it was hard to guess whether there was more love or hatred in that glance. None of the four, however, who were now dining and chatting so gayly together, had any presentiment at the time that they were amusing themselves over a

mine, which might explode at any moment and bury them.

It was the husband of the beautiful woman who provided the tinder. One day he told her that she must make up her mind to the most rigid retrenchment, give up her box at the opera, and sell her carriage and horses, if she did not wish to risk her whole position in society. Her creditors had lost all patience, and were threatening to distrain on her property, and even to put her in prison. She made no reply to this revelation, but during dinner she said to the Count, in a whisper, that she must speak to him later, and would, therefore, come to see him at his house. When it was dark she came thickly veiled, and after she had responded to his demonstrations of affection for some time with more patience than amiability, she began. Their conversation is extracted from his diary.

"You are so unconcerned and happy, while misery and disgrace are threatening me!"

"Please explain what you mean!"

"I have incurred some debts."

"Again?" he said reproachfully. "Why do you not come to me at once, for you must do it in the end, and then at least you would avoid exposure?"

"Please do not take me to task," she replied; "you know it only makes me angry. I want some money; can you give me some?"

"How much do you want?" She hesitated, for she had not the courage to name the real amount, but at last she said, in a low voice: "Five thousand florins." It was evidently only a small portion of what she really required, so he replied: "I am sure you want more than that!"

"No."

"Really not?"

"Do not make me angry."

He shrugged his shoulders, went to his strong-box, and gave her the money, whereupon she nodded, and, giving him her hand, she said: "You are always kind, and as long as I have you I am not afraid; but if I were to lose you I should be the most unhappy woman in the world."

"You always have the same fears; but I shall never leave you; it would be impossible for me to separate from you," the Count exclaimed.

"And if you die?" she interrupted him hastily.

"If I die?" the Count said, with a peculiar smile. "I have provided for you in that event, also."

"Do you mean to say——" she stammered, flushed, and her beautiful large eyes rested on her lover with an indescribable expression in them. He, however, opened a drawer in his writing table and took out a document, which he gave to her. It was his will. She opened it with almost indecent haste, and when she saw the amount—thirty thousand florins—she grew pale to her very lips.

It was a moment in which the germ of a crime was sown in her breast, but one of those crimes which cannot be touched by the Criminal Code. A few days after she had paid her visit to the Count she herself received one from the Italian. In the course of conversation he took a jewel case out of his breast pocket and asked her opinion of the ornaments, as she was well known for her taste in such matters, telling her at the same time that it was intended as a present for an actress whom he admired.

"It is a magnificent set!" she said, as she looked at it. "You have made an excellent selection." Then she suddenly became absorbed in thought, while her nostrils began to quiver, and that touch of cold cruelty played on her lips.

"Do you think that the lady for whom this ornament is intended will be pleased with it?" the Italian asked.

"Certainly," she replied; "I myself would give a great deal to own it."

"Then may I venture to offer it to you?" the Italian said.

She blushed, but did not refuse it. The same evening she rushed to the Count's apartment in a state of the greatest excitement. "I am beside myself," she stammered; "I have been most deeply insulted."

"By whom?" the Count asked excitedly.

"By your friend, who has dared to send me some jewelry to-day. I suppose he looks upon me as a lost woman; perhaps I am already looked upon as belonging to the *demi-monde,* and this I owe to you, to you alone, and to my mad love for you, to which I have sacrificed my honor and everything. Everything!" She threw herself down and sobbed, and would not be pacified until the Count gave her his word of honor that he would set aside every consideration for his friend, and obtain satisfaction for her at any price. He met the Italian the same evening at a card party and questioned him.

"I did not, in the first place, send the lady the jewelry, but I gave it to her myself, not, however, until she had asked me to do so."

"That is a shameful lie!" the Count shouted furiously. Unfortunately, there were others pres-

ent. His friend took the matter seriously, and the next morning sent his seconds to the Count.

Some of their real friends tried to settle the matter in another way, but his bad angel, the Viennese, who required thirty thousand florins, drove the Count to his death. He was found in the Prater with his friend's bullet in his chest. A letter in his pocket spoke of suicide, but the police did not doubt for a moment that a duel had taken place. Suspicion soon fell on the Italian, but when they went to arrest him he had already made his escape.

The broken-hearted father of the man who had been killed in the duel had hastened to Vienna on receipt of a telegram, and a few hours after his arrival the husband of the beautiful enigmatical woman called on him and demanded money: "My wife was your son's most intimate friend," he stammered, in embarrassment, in order to justify his action as well as he could. "Oh! I know that," the old Count replied, "and female friends of that kind want to be paid immediately, and in full. Here are the thirty thousand florins."

And our Goldkind? She paid her debts, and then withdrew from the scene for a while. She had been compromised, certainly, but then she had risen in value in the eyes of a certain class of men who can only adore and sacrifice themselves for a woman when her foot is on the threshold of vice and crime.

I saw her last during the Franco-German war, in the beautiful Mirabell Garden, at Salzburg. She did not appear to feel any qualms of conscience, for she had become considerably stouter, which made her more attractive, more beautiful, and consequently more dangerous, than she was before.

THE ILL-OMENED GROOM

AN Austrian banker discovered one day that a serious robbery had occurred in his home. Jewels, a valuable watch set with diamonds, his wife's miniature in a frame set with brilliants, and a considerable sum in money, the whole amounting in value to a hundred and fifteen thousand florins, had been stolen from his room. He went to the Director of Police to give notice of the robbery, but at the same time begged as a special favor that the investigation might be carried on as quietly and considerately as possible, as he declared that he had not the slightest ground for suspecting anybody in particular, and did not wish any innocent person to be accused.

"First of all, give me the names of all the persons who regularly go into your bedroom," the Police Director said.

"Nobody except my wife, my children, and Jo-

seph, my valet; a man for whom I would answer as I would for myself."

"Then you think him absolutely incapable of committing such a deed?"

"Most decidedly I do," the banker emphatically replied.

"Very well; then can you remember whether on the day on which you first missed the articles that have been stolen or on any days immediately preceding it anybody who was not a member of your household happened by chance to go to your bedroom?"

The banker thought for a moment and then said, with some hesitation:

"Nobody, absolutely nobody."

The experienced official, however, was struck by the banker's slight embarrassment and momentary blush, so he took his hand, and, looking him straight in the face, he said:

"You are not quite candid with me; somebody was with you, and you wish to conceal the fact from me. You must tell me everything."

"No, no; indeed, there was no one here."

"Then at present there is only one person on whom any suspicion can rest—and that is your valet."

"I will vouch for his honesty," the banker replied immediately.

"You may be mistaken, and I shall be obliged to question the man."

"May I beg you to do it with every possible consideration?"

"You may rely upon me for that."

An hour later the banker's valet was in the Police Director's private room. The official first of all

looked at his man very closely, and then came to the conclusion that such an honest, unembarrassed face and such quiet, steady eyes could not possibly belong to a criminal.

"Do you know why I have sent for you?"

"No, your honor."

"A serious theft has been committed in your master's house," the Police Director continued, "in his bedroom. Do you suspect anybody? Who has been in the room within the last few days?"

"Nobody but myself, except my master's family."

"Do you not see, my good fellow, that by saying that you throw suspicion on yourself?"

"Surely, sir," the valet exclaimed, "you do not believe . . ."

"I must not believe anything; my duty is merely to investigate and to follow up any traces that I may discover," was the reply. "If you have been the only person to go into the room within the last few days I must hold you responsible."

"My master knows me . . ."

The Police Director shrugged his shoulders. "Your master has vouched for your honesty, but that is not enough for me. You are the only person on whom, at present, any suspicion rests, and therefore I must—sorry as I am to do so—have you arrested."

"If that is so," the man said, after some hesitation, "I prefer to speak the truth, for my good name is more to me than my situation. Somebody was in my master's apartments yesterday."

"And this somebody was . . ."

"A lady."

"A lady of his acquaintance?"

The valet did not reply for some time.

"It must come out," he said at length. "My master has met a woman—you understand, sir, a pretty, fair woman; and he seems to be very fond of her, and goes to see her, but secretly, of course, for if my mistress were to find it out there would be a terrible scene. This person was in the house yesterday."

"Were they alone?"

"I showed her in myself, and she was in the bedroom. I had to call my master at once, as his confidential clerk wanted to speak to him, and so she was in the room alone for about a quarter of an hour."

"What is her name?"

"Cecilia K——; she is a Hungarian." At the same time the valet gave him her address.

Then the Director of Police sent for the banker, who, on being brought face to face with his valet, was obliged to acknowledge the truth of the facts which the latter had alleged, painful as it was for him to do so; whereupon orders were given to take Cecilia K—— into custody.

In less than half an hour, however, the police officer who had been despatched for that purpose returned and said that she had left her apartments, and most likely the capital also, the previous evening. The unfortunate banker was almost in despair. Not only had he been robbed of a hundred and fifty thousand florins, but at the same time he had lost the beautiful woman. He could not grasp the idea that a woman whom he had surrounded with Asiatic luxury, whose strangest whims he had gratified, and whose tyranny he had borne so patiently, could have deceived him so shamefully, and now he had a quar-

rel with his wife and an end of all domestic peace into the bargain.

The only thing the police could do was to send detectives after the lady, who had denounced herself by her flight, but it was all of no use. In vain did the banker, in whose heart hatred and thirst for revenge had taken the place of love, implore the director of police to employ every means to bring the beautiful criminal to justice, and in vain did he undertake to be responsible for all the costs of her prosecution, no matter how heavy they might be. Special police officers were told off to try and discover her, but Cecilia K—— was so inconsiderate as not to allow herself to be caught.

Three years had passed and the unpleasant story appeared to have been forgotten. The banker had obtained his wife's pardon, and the police did not appear to trouble themselves about the beautiful Hungarian any more.

The scene now changes to London. A wealthy lady who created much sensation in society, and who made many conquests both by her beauty and her behavior, was in need of a groom. Among the many applicants for the situation was a young man whose good looks and manners gave people the impression that he must have been very well educated. This was a recommendation in the eyes of the lady's maid, and she took him immediately to her mistress's boudoir. When he entered he saw a beautiful, voluptuous-looking woman, twenty-five years of age at most, with large, bright eyes and blue-black hair, which seemed to increase the brilliancy of her fair complexion. She was lying on a sofa. She looked at the young man, who had thick black hair, and who turned his glowing black eyes to the

ground, beneath her searching gaze, with evident satisfaction, and she seemed particularly taken with his slender, athletic build, and said half lazily and half proudly:

"What is your name?"

"Lajos Mariassi."

"A Hungarian?"

A strange look came into her eyes.

"Yes."

"How did you come here?"

"I am one of the many emigrants who have forfeited their country and their life; and I, who come of a good family, and who was an officer of the Honveds must now . . . go into service, and thank God if I find a mistress who is at the same time beautiful and an aristocrat, as you are."

Mademoiselle Zoë—that was the lovely woman's name—smiled, and at the same time showed two rows of pearly teeth.

"I like your appearance," she said, "and I feel inclined to take you into my service, if you are satisfied with my terms."

"A lady's whim," her maid said to herself, when she noticed the looks which Mademoiselle Zoë gave her manservant, "which will soon pass away." But that experienced female was mistaken that time.

Zoë was really in love, and the respect with which Lajos treated her put her into a very bad temper. One evening, when she intended to go to the Italian Opera, she countermanded her carriage and refused to see her noble admirer, who was ready to throw himself at her feet, and she ordered her groom to be sent up to her.

"Lajos," she began. "I am not at all satisfied with you."

"Why, Madame?"

"I do not wish to have you about me any longer; here are your wages for three months. Leave the house immediately." And she began to walk up and down the room impatiently.

"I will obey you, Madame," the groom replied, "but I shall not take my wages."

"Why not?" she asked hastily.

"Because then I should be under your authority for three months," Lajos said, "and I intend to be free, this very moment, so that I may be able to tell you that I entered your service, not for the sake of your money, but because I love and adore you as a beautiful woman."

"You love me!" Zoë exclaimed. "Why did you not tell me sooner? I merely wished to banish you from my presence, because I love you and did not think that you loved me. But you shall smart for having tormented me so. Come to my feet immediately."

The groom knelt before the lovely girl, and from that moment Lajos became her favorite. Of course he was not allowed to be jealous, as the young lord was still her official lover, who had the pleasure of paying her bills, and besides him, there was a whole army of so-called "good friends," who were fortunate enough to obtain a smile now and then, and who, in return, had permission to present her with rare flowers, a parrot, or diamonds.

The more intimate Zoë became with Lajos the more uncomfortable she felt when he looked at her, as he frequently did, with undisguised contempt. She was wholly under his influence and was afraid of him, and one day, while he was playing with her dark curls, he said jeeringly:

"It is usually said that contrasts attract each other, and yet you are as dark as I am."

She smiled and then tore off her black curls, and immediately the most charming, fair-haired woman was sitting by the side of Lajos, who looked at her attentively, but without any surprise.

He left the house at about midnight in order to look after the horses, as he said, and she retired. In two hours' time she was roused from her slumbers and saw a police inspector and two constables by the side of her bed.

"Whom do you want?" she cried.

"Cecilia K——"

"I am Mademoiselle Zoë."

"Oh! I know you," the inspector said, with a smile; "be kind enough to take off your dark locks, and you will be Cecilia K——. I arrest you in the name of the law."

"Good heavens!" she stammered. "Lajos has betrayed me."

"You are mistaken, Madame," the inspector replied; "he has merely done his duty."

"What? Lajos . . . my adorer?"

"No, Lajos, the detective."

Cecilia got out of bed, and the next moment sank fainting to the floor.

IN HIS SWEETHEART'S LIVERY

AT the time the talented young Hungarian poet first made her acquaintance and discovered her histrionic ability, in 1847, she was a beautiful girl though not of high moral character. She is now an intellectual, elegant, great lady and a celebrated actress.

The slim, intense girl, with her bright brown hair and her large blue eyes, attracted the careless poet, and he loved her, and all that was good and noble in her nature blossomed forth in the sunshine of his poetic adoration.

They lived in an attic in the old imperial city on the Danube, and she shared his poverty, his triumphs, and his pleasures, and would have become his true and faithful wife if the Hungarian revolution had not torn him from her arms.

The poet became the soldier of freedom and followed the Magyar tricolor and the Honved drums, while she was carried away by the current of the

movement in the capital, and might have been seen discharging her musket, like a brave Amazon, at the Croats, who were defending the town against Görgey's attacking battalions.

But at last Hungary was subdued, and was governed as if it had been a conquered country.

It was said that the young poet had fallen at Temesvar, and the girl wept for him, and then married another man, which was nothing either new or extraordinary. Her name was now Frau von Kubinyi, but her married life was not happy; and one day it occurred to her that the poet had told her that she had a talent for the stage, and whatever he said had always proved correct, so she separated from her husband, studied a few parts, appeared on the stage, and the public, the critics, actors, and magazine writers were at her feet.

She obtained a very profitable engagement, and her reputation increased with every part she played; and before the end of a year after her first appearance she was the lioness of society. Everybody paid homage to her, and the wealthiest men tried to obtain her favor; but she remained cold and reserved until the general commanding the district, a handsome man of noble bearing and a gentleman in the highest sense of the word, approached her.

Whether she was flattered at seeing that great man, before whom millions trembled and who had to decide over the life and death, the honor and happiness of so many thousands, enslaved by her soft curls, or whether her enigmatical heart for once really felt what true love was, suffice it to say that in a short time the General was under her command and was surrounding her with the luxury of an Eastern queen.

But just then a miracle occurred—the resurrection of a dead man. Frau von Kubinyi was driving through the Corso in the General's carriage; she was lying back negligently in the soft cushions and looking carelessly at the crowd on the pavement. Suddenly she caught sight of a common Austrian soldier and screamed aloud.

Nobody heard that cry which came from the depths of a woman's heart; nobody saw how pale and how excited was that woman who usually seemed made of marble, not even the soldier who was the cause of her agitation. He was a Hungarian poet who, like so many other Honveds, now wore the uniform of an Austrian soldier.

Two days later, to his no small surprise, he was told to report to the general in command, as orderly, and when he presented himself he told him to go to Frau von Kubinyi's and to await her orders.

Our poet only knew her by report, but he hated and despised most cordially the beautiful woman whom report associated with the enemy of his country. He had no choice, however, but to obey.

When he arrived at her house he seemed to be expected, for the porter knew his name, took him into his lodge, and without any further explanation told him immediately to put on the livery of his mistress, which was lying there ready for him. He ground his teeth but resigned himself without a word to his wretched, though laughable, fate; it was quite clear that the actress had some purpose in making the poet wear her livery. He tried to remember whether he could formerly have offended her by his notices as a theatrical critic, but before he could arrive at any conclusion he was told to go and show himself to Frau von Kubinyi.

She evidently wished to enjoy his humiliation.

He was shown into a small drawing-room, which was furnished with an amount of taste and magnificence such as he had never seen before, and was told to wait. But he had not been alone many minutes before the door curtains were parted and Frau von Kubinyi came in, calm but deadly pale, in a splendid robe of some Turkish material, and he recognized his former sweetheart.

"Irma!" he exclaimed.

The cry came from his heart, and it affected the woman who was surfeited with pleasure so greatly that the next moment her head was on the shoulder of the man whom she had believed to be dead. But only for a moment, and then he freed himself from her.

"We are fated to meet again thus!" she began.

"Not through any fault of mine," he replied bitterly.

"And not through mine, either," she said quickly; "everybody thought that you were dead, and I wept for you; that is my justification."

"You are really too kind," he replied sarcastically. "How can you condescend to make any excuses to me? I wear your livery, and you have to order and I obey; our relative positions are clear enough."

Frau von Kubinyi turned away to hide her tears.

"I did not intend to hurt your feelings," he continued; "but I must confess that it would have been better for both of us if we had not met again. But what do you mean by making me wear your livery? Is it not enough that I have been robbed of my happiness? Does it afford you any pleasure to humiliate me as well?"

"How can you think that?" the actress exclaimed. "Ever since I discovered your unhappy lot I have thought of nothing but the means of delivering you from it, and until I succeed in doing this I can at least make it more bearable for you."

"I understand," the unhappy poet said, with a sneer. "And in order to do this you have begged your present worshiper to turn me into a footman."

"What a thing to say to me!"

"Can you find any other pleasure as a substitute? You wish to punish me for having loved you, idolized you, I suppose?" the poet continued. "So exactly like a woman! But I can perfectly well understand that the situation promises to have a fresh charm for you. . . ."

Before he could finish what he was saying the actress quickly left the room; he could hear her sobbing, but he did not regret his words, and his contempt and hatred for her only increased, when he saw the extravagance and the princely luxury with which she was surrounded. But what was the use of his indignation? He was wearing her livery and he was obliged to wait upon her and to obey her, for she had the corporals at her command, and it really seemed as if he incurred the vengeance of the offended woman, as if she wished to make him feel her whole power, as if he were not to be spared the deepest humiliation.

The General and three of Frau von Kubinyi's friends, who were also on the stage—one a ballet dancer and the two other actresses—had come to tea, and he was to wait on them.

While tea was being prepared he heard them laughing in the next room and the blood rushed to his head. When the butler opened the door Frau

von Kubinyi appeared on the General's arm; she did not, however, look at her new footman, her former lover, triumphantly or contemptuously, but she gave him a glance of the deepest commiseration.

Could he, after all, have wronged her in his thoughts?

Hatred and love, contempt and jealousy were struggling in his breast, and when he had to fill the glasses the bottle shook in his hand.

"Is this the man?" the General said, looking at him closely.

Frau von Kubinyi nodded.

"He was evidently not born for a footman," the General added.

"And still less for a soldier," the actress observed.

These words fell heavily on the unfortunate poet's heart, but she was evidently taking his part and trying to rescue him from his terrible position.

Suspicion, however, once more gained the day.

"She is tired of all pleasure and satiated with enjoyment," he said to himself; "she requires excitement and it amuses her to see the man whom she formerly loved, and who, as she knows, still loves her, tremble before her. And when she pleases she can see me tremble; not for my life but for fear of the disgrace which she can inflict upon me at any moment if it should give her any pleasure."

But suddenly the actress gave him a look which was so sad and so imploring that he looked down in confusion.

From that time he remained in her house without performing any duties and without receiving any orders from her; in fact, he never saw her and

did not venture to ask after her, and two months had passed in this way when the General unexpectedly sent for him. He waited, with many others, in the anteroom, and when the General came back from parade he saw him and beckoned him to follow him, and as soon as they were alone he said:

"You are free, as you have been allowed to purchase your discharge."

"Good heavens!" the poet stammered, "how am I to——"

"That is already done," the General replied. "You are free."

"How is it possible? How can I thank your excellency?"

"You owe me no thanks," he replied; "Frau von Kubinyi bought your release."

The poor poet's heart seemed to stop; he could not speak nor even stammer a word, but with a low bow he rushed out and tore wildly through the streets until he reached the mansion of the woman whom he had so misunderstood, quite out of breath; he must see her again and throw himself at her feet.

"Where are you going to?" the porter asked him.

"To Frau von Kubinyi's."

"She is not here."

"Not here?"

"She has gone away."

"Gone away? Where to?"

"She started for Paris two hours ago."

THE JENNET

THE day after General Daumont de Croisailles held a review he was sure to receive a package of notes from women.

Some were scribbled on paper with a love emblem at the top, as if from some sentimental milliner; others were ardent, as if saturated with curry.

Among them were some which evidently came from a woman of the world, who was tired of her monotonous life, had lost her head, and let her pen run on, without exactly knowing what she was writing, with those mistakes in spelling here and there which seemed to indicate the disordered beating of her heart.

The General certainly looked magnificent on horseback. There was something of the fighter, something bold and defiant about him, a valiant look, as

our grandmothers used to say, when they threw themselves into the arms of the conquerors, in the intervals of a campaign, though these same conquerors had loud, rough voices, even when they were making love, from being obliged to raise them above the noise of the firing, and used violent gestures, as if they were swinging their swords and issuing orders, and they did not waste time over useless refinements and in squandering the precious hours, which were counted so avariciously, in minor caresses.

As soon as he appeared sitting erect in the saddle, sword in hand, preceded by dragoons and a little ahead of his staff, amid the clatter of hoofs and jingling of scabbards and bridles and the waving plumes and uniforms glittering in the sun, his cocked hat with the black plumes slightly tilted to one side, the surging crowd cheered him as if he had been some popular minister, whose arrival had been announced beforehand.

That tumult of strident voices that resounded from one end of the great square to the other, and was prolonged like the sound of the rising tide beating against the shore; that rattle of rifles, and the sound of the music that alternated with blasts of the trumpets all along the line, made the General's heart swell with unspeakable pride.

He posed in spite of himself, and thought of nothing but ostentation and adulation. He continually touched his horse with the spur and worried it, so as to make it appear restive, and to prance and rear, to champ its bit, and to cover itself with foam; and then he would continue his inspection, galloping from regiment to regiment with a satisfied smile, while the good old infantry captains, sit-

ting on their thin Arab horses, their toes well turned out, said to one another:

"I should not like to have to ride a confounded restive brute like that!"

But the General's aide-de-camp, litle Jacques de Montboron, could easily have reassured them, for he knew those famous thoroughbreds, as he had had to break them in, and had received a thousand trifling instructions about them.

They were generally more or less spavined brutes which he had bought at auction for a nominal sum, and so quiet and well in hand that they might have been held with a silk thread, but they were well made, with bright eyes and coats that glistened like satin. They seemed to know their part, and stepped out, pranced and reared, and made way for themselves, as if they had just come out of the riding-school at Saumur.

That was his daily task, his obligatory service.

He broke them in, one after the other, and transformed them into veritable mechanical horses, accustomed them to bear the noise of trumpets and drums, and of musketry, without starting, tired them out by long rides the evening before every review, and bit his lips to prevent himself from laughing when people declared that General Daumont de Croisailles was a splendid horseman, who really loved danger.

A horseman! That was almost as true as history! But the aide-de-camp discreetly kept up the illusion, outdid the others in flattery, and related unheard-of feats of the General's horsemanship.

And, after all, breaking in horses was not more irksome than carrying on a monotonous and dull correspondence about the buttons on the gaiters, or

than thinking over projects of mobilization, or than going through accounts in which he lost himself as in a labyrinth. It was not in vain that, from the very first day that he entered the military academy at Saint-Cyr, he had learned that sentence which begins the rules of the Department of the Interior:

"As discipline constitutes the principal strength of an army, it is very important for every superior to obtain absolute respect and instant obedience from his inferiors."

He never rebelled, but accustomed himself to become a sort of Monsieur Loyal, spoke to his chief in the most obsequious manner, and counted on being promoted over the heads of his fellow officers.

General Daumont de Croisailles was not married and did not intend to disturb the tranquillity of his bachelor life as long as he lived, for he loved all women, whether they were dark, fair, or red-haired, too devotedly to love only one, who would grow old and worry him with useless complaints.

He was gallant, as men used to be called in the good old days; he kissed the hands of those women who refused him their lips, and as he did not wish to compromise his dignity and be the talk of the town, he had rented a small house just outside it.

It was close to the canal in a quiet street with courtyards and shady gardens, and as nothing is less amusing than the racket of jealous husbands or the brawling of excited women who are disputing or raising their voices in lamentation, and as it is always necessary to foresee some unfortunate incident or other, some unlucky mishap, some absurdly imprudent action, some forgotten love appointment, the house had five different doors.

So discreet that he reassured even the most

timid, and certainly not given to melancholy, he understood extremely well how to vary his kisses and his ways of proceeding; how to work on women's feelings, and to overcome their scruples, to obtain a hold over them through their curiosity to learn something new, by the temptation of a comfortable, well-furnished, warm room, fragrant with flowers, where a little supper was awaiting them.

Men mistrusted that ancient Lovelace as if he had been the plague, when they had sketched out some charming adventure for themselves; for he always managed to discover their secret and outgeneral them.

To some women he held out the irresistible argument that led astray Danaë, that of gold; others were attracted by his uniform and military rank, and their pride was flattered at the thought of seeing him at their feet.

His pay, allowances, and his private income of fifteen thousand francs, all went in this way, like water that leaks from a cracked bottle.

He was continually on the alert and looked out for intrigues with the acuteness of a detective, followed women about and had all the impudence and cleverness of the fast man who has made love for forty years without ever meaning anything serious, who knows all its lies, tricks, and illusions, and who can still do a march without halting on the road or requiring too much music to put him in proper trim. And in spite of his age and gray hairs, he could have given a sub-lieutenant points, and was very often loved for his own sake, which is the dream of men who have passed forty and do not intend to give up the game just yet.

There were a dozen or more women whom he

had not captivated, however, and one of these was Jacques de Montboron's sweetheart. She was a little marvel, that Madame Courtade, whom the Captain had met in an ecclesiastical warehouse in the Faubourg Saint-Exupère, and she was not yet twenty. They had begun by smiling at each other, and by exchanging those long looks when they met which seemed to ask for charity.

Montboron used to pass in front of the shop at the same hours, and stop for a moment with the appearance of a lounger who was loitering about the streets, but presently her supple figure would appear, pink and fair, shedding the brightness of youth and almost childhood around her, while her looks showed that she was delighted at the gallant incident which dispelled the monotony and weariness of her life for a time, and gave rise to vague but delightful hopes.

Was love, that love which she had so constantly invoked, really knocking at her door at last, and taking pity on her unhappy isolation? Did that officer whom she met whenever she went out, when coming out of church, or when out for a walk in the evening—as if he had been watching for her—who said so many delightful things to her with his fascinating eyes, really love her as she wished to be loved, or was he merely amusing himself at that game, because he had nothing better to do in their quiet little town?

But in a short time he wrote to her and she replied to him, and at last they managed to meet in secret, to make appointments, and to talk together.

She knew all the cunning tricks of a simple girl, who has tasted the most delicious of sweets with the tip of her tongue, and acting in concert, and giv-

ing each other the word, so that there might be no awkward mistake, they managed to make the husband their unwitting accomplice, without his having the least idea of what was going on.

Courtade was an excellent fellow, who saw no further than the tip of his nose, incapable of rebelling, flabby, fat, steeped in devotion, and thinking too much about heaven to see what a plot was being hatched against him in our unhappy vale of tears, as the Psalmist calls it.

In the good old days of confederacies, he would have made an excellent chief of a corporation; he loved his wife more as a father than a husband, believing that at his age a man ought no longer to think of such trifles, and that, after all, the only real happiness in life was to keep a good table and to have a good digestion; and so he ate like four canons, and drank in proportion.

Only once during his whole life had he shown anything like energy—but he used to relate that occurrence with all the pride of a conqueror recalling his most heroic battle—and that was on the evening when he refused to allow the bishop to take his cook away, quite regardless of any of the consequences of such a daring deed.

In a few weeks the Captain became his regular table companion and his best friend. He had begun by telling Courtade in a boastful manner that, in order to keep a vow that he had made to St. George during the charge up the slope at Yron, during the battle of Gravelotte, he wished to send two censers and a sanctuary lamp to his village church.

Courtade did his utmost, and all the more readily as this unexpected customer did not appear to pay any regard to money. He sent for several gold-

smiths, and showed Montboron models of all kinds; the latter hesitated, however, and did not seem able to make up his mind, and discussed the subject, designed ornaments himself, gained time, and thus managed to spend several hours every day in the shop.

In fact, he was quite at home in the place, shook hands with Courtade, called him " my dear fellow," and did not wince when Courtade took his arm familiarly before other people and introduced him to his customers as, " My excellent friend, the Marquis de Montboron." He could go in and out of the house as he pleased, whether the husband was at home or not.

The censers and the lamp were sent in due course to Montboron's château at Pacy-sur-Romanche (in Normandy), and when the package was undone it caused the greatest surprise to Jacques's mother, who was more accustomed to receiving requests for money from her son than ecclesiastical objects.

Suddenly, however, without rhyme or reason, little Madame Courtade became insupportable and enigmatical. Her husband could not understand it at all, and grew uneasy and continually consulted his friend, the captain.

Etiennette's character seemed to have completely changed; she found fifty pretexts for deserting the shop, for coming in late, for avoiding *tête-à-têtes,* in which people come to explanations and mutually become irritated, though such matters usually end in a reconciliation, amid a torrent of kisses.

She disappeared for days at a time, and soon Montboron, who was not fitted to play the part of a Sganarelle, either by age or temperament, became

convinced that his lady-love was making a fool of him, that she was flirting with the General, and as he was as jealous as an Andalusian, and felt a horror of that kind of pleasantry, he swore that he would make his rival pay a hundredfold for the trick which he had played him.

The Fourteenth of July was approaching, when there was to be a grand parade of the whole garrison on the large parade ground; and all along the paling which shut off the spectators from the soldiers itinerant dealers had put up their stalls, and there were mountebanks' and clairvoyants' booths, menageries, and a large circus, which had gone through the town in caravans, with a great noise of trumpets and of drums.

The General had given his aide-de-camp instructions beforehand, for he was more anxious than ever to surprise people, and to have a horse like an equestrian model, an animal which should outdo that famous black horse of General Boulanger's, about which the Parisian loungers had talked so much, and he told Montboron not to mind what the price was, as long as he found him a suitable steed.

When the Captain, a few days before the review, brought him a chestnut jennet with a long tail and flowing mane, which would not keep quiet for five seconds, but kept on shaking its head, had unusual action, answered the slightest touch of the leg, and stepped out as if it knew no other motion, General Daumont de Croisailles showered compliments upon him, and assured him that he knew few officers who possessed his intelligence and his value, and that he should not forget him when the time came to recommend him for promotion.

Not a muscle of the Marquis de Montboron's face

moved, and when the day of the review arrived, he was at his post on the staff that followed the General, who sat as upright as a dart in the saddle, and looked at the crowd to see whether he could not recognize some old or new female acquaintance, while his horse pranced and plunged.

He rode on to the review ground, amid the increasing noise of applause, with a smile upon his lips, when, suddenly, at the moment that he galloped up into the large square formed by the troops drawn up in a line, the band of the fifty-third regiment struck up a quick march, and, as if obeying a preconcerted signal, the jennet began to turn round, and to accelerate its speed, in spite of the furious tugs at the bridle which the rider gave.

The horse performed beautifully, followed the rhythm of the music, and appeared to be acting under some invisible impulse, and the General had such a comical look on his face, he looked so disconcerted, rolled his eyes, and seemed to be the prey to such terrible exasperation, that he might have been taken for some character in a pantomine, while his staff followed him without being able to comprehend this new whim of his.

The soldiers presented arms, the music continued, though the performers were much astonished at this interminable ride.

The General at last became out of breath, and could scarcely keep in the saddle, and the women, in the crowded ranks of the spectators, gave prolonged, nervous laughs, which made the old *roué's* ears tingle with annoyance.

The horse did not stop until the music ceased, and then it knelt down with bent head and put its nose to the ground.

It nearly gave General de Croisailles an attack of the jaundice, especially when he found out that it was his aide-de-camp's tit for tat, and that the horse came from a circus which was giving performances in the town. And what irritated him all the more was that he could not even set it down against Montboron and have him sent to some terrible out-of-the-way hole, for the Captain sent in his resignation, wisely considering that sooner or later he should have to pay the cost of that little trick, and that the chances were that he should not get any further promotion, but remain stationary, like a cab which some swindler leaves standing for hours at one end of an arcade, while he makes his escape at the other end.

KIND GIRLS

VERY Friday regularly about eleven o'clock in the morning he came into the courtyard, laid his soft felt hat at his feet, struck a few chords on his guitar, and then began to sing a ballad in a full, rich voice. And presently, at every window in the four sides of that dull, barracklike building, some girls appeared, one in an elegant dressing-gown, another in a little jacket, most of them with their breasts and arms bare, all of them just out of bed, with their hair hastily twisted up, their eyes blinking in the sudden blaze of sunlight, their complexions dull, and their eyes still heavy from want of sleep.

They swayed themselves backward and forward to his slow melody, and gave themselves up to the enjoyment of it, and coppers and even silver poured into the handsome singer's hat, and more than one of them would have been glad to follow the penny which she threw to him, and to go away with the

singer who had the voice of a siren, and who seemed to say to all these amorous girls: "Come, come to my retreat, where you will find a palace of crystal and gold, and wreaths which are always fresh, and happiness and love which never die."

That was what they seemed to hear, those unhappy girls, when they heard him sing the song of the old legends which they had formerly believed. That was what they understood by the foolish words of the ballad. That and nothing else, for how could any one doubt it on seeing the fresh roses on their cheeks and the tender flame which flickered like a mystic night light in their eyes, which had, for the moment, become the eyes of innocent young girls again? But of young girls who had grown up very quickly, alas! who were very precocious, and who very soon became the women that they were, poor vendors of love, always in search of love for which they were paid.

That was why, when he had finished his second ballad, and sometimes even sooner, languorous looks appeared in their eyes. The boatman of their dreams, the water sprite of fairy tales, vanished in the mist of their childish recollections, and the singer reassumed his real shape, that of musician and strolling player, whom they wished to pay to be their lover. And the coppers and small silver were showered on him again, with engaging smiles, with the leers of a street-walker, even with "*p'st, p'st,*" which soon transformed the barrack-like courtyard into an enormous cage full of twittering birds, while some of them could not restrain themselves, but said aloud, rolling their eyes with desire: "How handsome the creature is! Good heavens, how handsome he is!"

He was really handsome, and nobody could deny it, and even too handsome, with a regular beauty which almost palled on people. He had large, almond-shaped, gentle eyes, a Grecian nose, a bow-shaped mouth, hidden by a heavy mustache, and long, black, curly hair; in short, a head fit to be put into a hairdresser's window, or, better still, perhaps, upon the front page of the ballads which he was singing. But what made him still handsomer was that his self-conceit had a look of sovereign indifference, for he was not satisfied with not replying to the smiles, the ogles, and the *p'st, p'st's,* by taking no notice of them; but when he had finished he shrugged his shoulders, he winked mischievously, and turned up his lips contemptuously, which said very clearly: "The stove is not being heated for you, my little kittens!"

Often one might have thought that he expressly wished to show his contempt, and that he tried to make himself thought unpoetical in the eyes of all those amorous girls, and to check their love, for he cleared his throat ostentatiously and offensively, more than was necessary, after singing, as if he would have liked to spit at them. But all that did not make him unpoetical in their eyes, and many of them, who were absolutely mad on him, went so far as to say that "he did it like a swell!"

The girl who in her enthusiasm had been the first to utter that exclamation of intense passion, and who, after throwing him small silver, had thrown him a twenty-franc gold piece, at last made up her mind to have an explanation. Instead of a *p'st, p'st,* she spoke to him boldly one morning, in the presence of all the others, who religiously held their tongues.

"Come up here," she called out to him, and from habit she added: "I will be very nice, you handsome dark fellow."

At first they were dumfounded at her audacity, and then all their cheeks flushed with jealousy, and the flame of mad desire shot from their eyes. From every window there came a perfect torrent of:

"Yes, come up, come up." "Don't go to her! Come to me."

And, meanwhile, there was a shower of halfpence, of francs, of gold coins, as well as of cigars and oranges, while lace pocket-handkerchiefs, silk neckties, and scarfs fluttered in the air and fell round the singer like a flight of many-colored butterflies.

He picked up the spoil calmly, almost carelessly, stuffed the money into his pocket, made a bundle of the furbelows, which he tied up as if they had been soiled linen, and then, raising himself up and putting his felt hat on his head, he said:

"Thank you, ladies, but indeed I cannot."

They thought that he did not know how to satisfy so many demands at once, and one of them said: "Let him choose."

"Yes, yes, that is it!" they all exclaimed unanimously.

But he repeated: "I tell you I cannot."

They thought he was excusing himself out of gallantry, and several of them exclaimed, almost with tears of emotion: "Women are all heart!" And the same voice that had spoken before (it was one of the girls who wished to settle the matter amicably) said: "We must draw lots."

"Yes, yes, that is it," they all cried. And again there was a religious silence, more religious than

before, for it was caused by anxiety, and the beatings of their hearts may have been heard.

The singer profited by it, to say slowly: "I cannot have that, either; nor all of you at once, nor one after the other; nothing! I tell you that I cannot."

"Why? Why?" And now they were almost screaming, for they were angry and sorry at the same time. Their cheeks had gone from scarlet to livid, their eyes flashed fire, and some shook their fists menacingly.

"Silence!" the girl cried who had spoken first. "Be quiet, you pack of huzzies! Let him explain himself, and tell us why!"

"Yes, yes, let us be quiet! Make him explain himself, in God's name!"

Then, in the fierce silence that ensued, the singer said, opening his arms wide, with a gesture of despairing inability to do what they wanted:

"What do you want? It is very amusing, but I cannot do more. I have two girls of my own already at home."

MAMMA STIRLING

TALL, slim, her figure well defined under her transparent dress of gauze, which fell in straight folds, with gold bracelets on her slender wrists, with languor in her rich voice, and something undulating and feline in the rhythmical swing of her wrist and hips, Tatia Caroly was singing one of those sweet Creole songs which call up some far distant fairyland and unknown caresses, for which the lips remain always thirsting.

Footit, the clown, was leaning against the piano. His blackened face, and his mouth that looked like the red gash from a saber cut, and his wide-open eyes, all expressed feelings of the most extravagant emotion, while some negroes squatted on the ground and accompanied the orchestra by strumming on some yellow, hollow gourds.

But what made the women and children laugh

most in the pantomime of the "New Circus" was the incessant quarrel between an enormous Danish hound and a poor supernumerary, who was blackened like a negro minstrel and dressed like a mulatto woman. The dog was always annoying him, following him, and snapping at his legs and at his old wig with his sharp teeth, and he tore his coat and his silk pocket-handkerchief whenever he could get hold of it. The man would positively allow himself to be molested and bitten, playing his part with dull resignation, with the mechanical unconsciousness of a man who has come down in the world, and who gains his livelihood as best he can, and who has already endured worse things than that.

Half turning round to the two clubmen with whom she had just been dining at the Café Anglais, as she handled her large fan of black feathers with a pretty, supple motion of her wrist, while the light fell on to the nape of her fair neck, Noële de Fréjus exclaimed: "Wherever did they unearth that horrible, grotesque figure?"

Lord Shelley, who was a pillar of the circus, and who knew the performances, the length of time the acrobats had been performing, and the private history of all of them, whether clowns or circus riders, replied: "Do not you recognize him, my dear?"

"That lump of soot? Are you joking?"

"He certainly has changed very much, poor fellow, and not for the better. James Stirling was, however, once a model of manly beauty and elegance, and he led such an extravagant life that all sorts of stories were rife about him, and many people declared that he was some high-class adventurer. . . . At any rate, he thought no more of danger than he did of smoking a good cigar.

"Do you not remember him at the Hippodrome, when he stood on the bare back of a horse and drove five others tandem at full gallop and without making a mistake, but checking them or urging them on with his thin, muscular hands, just as he pleased? And he seemed to be riveted to the horse, as if he had been held on by invisible hands."

"Yes, I remember him . . . James Stirling," she said. "The circus rider, James Stirling, on whose account that tall girl, Caro, who was also a circus rider, gave that old stager, Blanche Taupin, a cut right and left across the face with her riding whip, because she had tried to get him from her. . . . But what can have happened to bring him down to such a position?"

Horrible, hairy monkeys, grimacing under their red and blue masks, had invaded the arena, and with their hair hanging down on their bare shoulders, looking very funny with their long tails, their gray skin tights and their velvet breeches, these female dancers twisted, jumped, hopped, and drew their lascivious and voluptuous circle more closely round Chocolat, who shook the red skirts of his coat, rolled his eyes, and showed his large white teeth in a foolish smile, as if he were the prey to irresistible desire, and yet terribly afraid of what might happen; and Lord Shelley, helping himself to some grapes out of a basket that Noële de Fréjus offered him, said: "It is not a very cheerful story, but then true stories rarely are. At the time when he was still unknown, and when he used to have to tighten his belt more frequently for lack of enough to eat and drink, James Stirling followed the destinies of a circus which traveled with its vans from fair to fair and from place to place, and fell in love with a

gypsy columbine, who also formed part of this wandering, half-starved company.

" She was not twenty and astonished the others by her rash boldness, her absolute contempt for danger and obstacles, and her strange and adroit strength. She charmed them also by a magic attraction which came from her hair, which was darker than a starless night, from her large, black, coaxing, velvety eyes, that were concealed by the fringe of such long lashes that they curled upward, from her scented skin, that was as velvety as rice-paper, and every touch of which was a suggestive and tempting caress, from her firm, full, smiling, childlike mouth, which uttered nothing but laughter, jokes, and love songs, and seemed made for kissing.

" She rode barebacked horses without bit or bridle, stretched herself at full length on their backs as if on a bed, her flowing hair mingling with their manes, swaying her supple body to their most impetuous movements, at other times standing almost on their shoulders or on the croup, while she juggled with looking-glasses, brass balls, knives that flashed as they twirled rapidly round in the smoky light of the paraffin lamps that were fastened to the tent poles.

" Her name was Sacha, that pretty Slavonic name which has such a sweet and strange sound, and she loved him entirely, because he was handsome, strong, and spoke to women very gently, as one talks to quite little children who are easily frightened and made to cry, and it was on her account that in a quarrel in Holland he knocked down an Italian wild beast tamer, with a blow between the two eyes.

" They adored each other so that they never thought of their poverty, but were just as devoted

when they had nothing to eat, not even an unripe apple stolen from an orchard nor a lump of bread which they had begged on the road of some charitable soul. And they were often obliged to stop for the night in the open country, and shiver in the old, badly-closed vans, and had to be very sparing with the wood, and could not light up the snow with those large bivouac fires, whose smoke rises in such fantastic, spiral curls, and whose flames look like a spot of blood at a distance, seen through the mist.

" It was one of those bohemian, quasi-matrimonial arrangements which are often more enduring than ours, and in which a man and a woman do not part for a mere caprice, a dream, or a piece of folly.

" By-and-by she was no longer good for anything, and had to give up appearing on the program, for she was *enceinte*. James Stirling worked for both, and thought that he should die of grief when, after three days of intense suffering, she died with her hand in his.

" And now, all alone, crushed by grief, so ill that at times he thought his heart had stopped, the circus rider lived for the child which the dead woman had left him as a legacy. He bought a goat so that it might have pure milk, and brought it up with such infinite, deep, womanly tenderness that the child called him ' Mamma,' and in the circus they nicknamed him ' Mamma Stirling.'

" The boy was like his mother, and one might have said that he had brought James luck, for he had made his mark, was receiving a good income, and appeared in every performance. Well-made and agile, and profiting by the lessons which he received at the circus, little Stirling was soon fit to appear on

the posters, and the night when he made his first appearance at Franconi's old Tom Pears, the clown, who understood such matters better than most, exclaimed:

"'My boy, you will make your way if you don't break your neck first!'

"'I will take care of that, Monsieur Pears,' the lad replied, with a careless shrug of his shoulders.

"He was extremely daring, and when he threw himself from one trapeze to the other, in a bold flight through the air, one might almost have fancied in the silvery electric light that he was some fabulous bird with folded wings, and he executed all his feats with unequaled natural grace, without seeming to make an effort, but he unbraced his limbs of steel and condensed all his strength in one supreme, mad leap. His chest, under its pearl-gray tights, hardly rose, and there was not a drop of perspiration on his forehead among the light curls which framed it like a golden halo.

"He had an almost disdainful manner of smiling at the public, as if he were an artist who loves his profession and who is amused at danger, rather than an acrobat who is paid to amuse people after dinner, and during his most difficult feats he often uttered a shrill cry like that of some wild beast which defies the sportsman as it falls on its prey. But that sportsman is always on the alert, and he is the Invisible, which closes the brightest eyes and the most youthful lips forever. In spite of one's self, one was excited by it and could have wished, from a superstitious instinct, that he would not continually give that defiant cry, which seemed to give him pleasure.

"James Stirling watched over him as the mother

of an actress does who knows that she is in some corner and fears dangerous connections in which the strongest are entangled and ruined; and they lived together in a boarding-house near the Arc de Triomphe. It was a very simple apartment, with immense posters of every color and in every language, on which the name of Stirling appeared in large, striking letters, pinned to the wall; photographs with inscriptions, and tinsel wreaths, though there were two of real laurel, that were covered with dust and were gradually falling to pieces.

" One night the young fellow for the first time did not come home, and returned only in time for rehearsal, tired, with blue rims under his eyes, his lips cracked and feverish, and with pale cheeks, but with such a look of happiness and such a peculiar light in his eyes that Mamma Stirling felt as if he had been stabbed, and had not the strength to find fault with him; and, emboldened, radiant, longing to give vent to the mad joy which filled his whole being, to express his sensations and recount his happiness, like a lad talking to his elder brother, he told James Stirling his love intrigue from beginning to end, and how much in love he was with the fair-haired girl who had clasped him in her arms and told him she loved him.

" It had been coming for some time, he said. She went to every performance, and always occupied the same box. She used to send him letters by the usher, letters which smelled like bunches of violets, and she always smiled at him when he came into the ring to bow to the public, amid the applause and recalls; and it was that smile, those red, half-opened lips, which seemed made for kisses and tender words, that attracted him like some strange, fra-

grant fruit. Sometimes she came with gentlemen in evening dress and with gardenias in their buttonholes, who seemed to bore her terribly, if not to disgust her. And he was happy, although he had never yet spoken to her, that she had not that smile for them which she had for him, and that she appeared dull and sad, like somebody who is homesick or who has a great longing for something.

" On other evenings she would be all alone, with black pearls in the lobes of her small ears that were like pink shells, and would get up and leave her box as soon as he had finished his performance on the trapeze . . . while the evening before she had carried him off almost forcibly in her carriage, without even giving him time to get rid of his tights and the india-rubber armlets that he wore on his wrists. Oh! that return in the cold, in the semi-obscurity, through which the trembling light of the street lamps shone, that warm clasp of her arms round him which imprisoned him and by degrees drew him close to that warm body whose slightest throb and shiver he felt, as if she had been clothed in impalpable gauze, and which intoxicated him.

" And those despotic, imperious, divine kisses, when she pressed her lips to his, as if to make him dream of an eternity of bliss, intoxicating, overwhelming him with delight! And the carriage rolled on at a quick trot, through the silence of the snow, and they did not even hear the noise of the wheels, which buried themselves in that white carpet as if it had been cotton-wool. Suddenly, however, they began talking at random, like people who are not quite themselves and who have uncorked too many bottles of champagne on a benefit night.

" She questioned him and laughed at his theatri-

cal slang, wrapped her otter-skin rug round his legs, and murmured: 'Come close to me, darling; at any rate, you are not cold, I hope?'

"When they reached her pretty little house, with old tapestry and delicate-colored plush hangings, they found supper waiting for them, and she amused herself by waiting on him herself with the manners of a saucy waitress. And then there were kisses, constant, insatiable, maddening kisses, and the lad exclaimed, with glistening eyes, at the thoughts of future meetings: 'If you only knew how pretty she is! And then it is nicer than anything else in the world to obey her, to do whatever she wants, and to allow one's self to be loved as she wishes!'

"Mamma Stirling was very uneasy, but resigned himself to the inevitable, and, seeing how infatuated the boy was, he took care not to be too sharp with him or to keep too tight a hand upon the reins. The woman who had entangled the lad was a fast woman, and nothing else, and, after all, the old stager preferred that to one of those excitable women of the world, who are as dangerous for a man as the plague, whereas a girl of that sort can be taken and given up again, and one does not risk one's heart at the same time as one does one's skin, for a man knows what they are worth. He was mistaken, however. Nelly d'Argine—she is married to a Yankee now and has gone to New York with him—was one of those vicious women whom a man can only wish his worst enemy to have, and she had merely taken a fancy to the young fellow because she was bored to death, and because her senses were roused like smoldering embers which come to life again when a fire is nearly out.

"Unfortunately, the boy had taken the matter

seriously, and was very jealous, and as suspicious as a deer, and never imagined that this love affair could come to an end; and, proud as he was, with his hot gypsy blood, he wished to be the only lover, the only master, who could not be shown the door, like a troublesome and importunate parasite.

" Stirling had saved some money by dint of a hard struggle and had invested it in the Funds against a rainy day, when he should be too old to work and to gain a livelihood, and when he saw how madly in love his son was and how obstinate in his lamentable folly he gave him all his savings and deprived himself of his stout and gin so that the boy might have money to give away and might continue to be happy and not have any cares, and so between them they supported Nelly.

" Stirling's debts accumulated, and he mortgaged his salary for years in advance to the usurers who haunt circuses as if they were gambling hells, who are on the watch for passions, poverty, and disappointments, who keep plenty of ready-stamped bill paper in their pockets, as well as money, which they haggle over coin by coin. But in spite of all this the lad sang, did his turn, and amused himself, and would say, as he kissed his father on both cheeks: ' How kind you are in spite of everything! '

" After a month he became too exacting; he followed her, questioned her, and worried her with perpetual scenes, and Nelly found that she had had enough of her gymnast; he was a toy which she had done with and worn out, and which was now only in her way and only fit to throw into the gutter. She was satiated with him, and became once more the tranquil woman whom nothing can move and who baits her traps quite calmly in order to find a hus-

band and make a fresh start. And so she turned the young fellow out of doors as if he had been some beggar soliciting alms. He did not complain, however, and did not say anything to Mamma Stirling, but worked as he had done in the past and mastered himself with superhuman energy, so as to hide the grief that was gnawing at his heart and killing him, and the disenchantment with everything that was making him sick of life.

" Some time afterward, when there was to be a special performance for the officers, seeing Nelly d'Argine there in a box surrounded by her usual admirers, appearing indifferent to everything that was going on and not even apparently noticing that he was performing and was being heartily applauded, he threw his trapeze forward as far as he could, at the end of the performance, and, exerting all his strength and certain that he should fall beyond the protecting net, he flung himself furiously into space.

" A cry of horror resounded from one end of the house to the other when he was picked up disfigured and with nearly every bone in his body broken. The unfortunate young fellow was no longer breathing, his chest was crushed in and blood-stained froth was issuing from his lips, and Nelly d'Argine made haste to leave the house with her friends, saying, in a tone of annoyance:

" ' It is very disgusting to come in the hopes of being amused and to witness an accident! '

" And Mamma Stirling, who was ruined and in utter despair, and who cared for nothing more in this world, after that took to drinking, would get constantly drunk, and rolled from public house to public house and bar to bar, and as the worst glass

of vitriol still cost two sous he became reduced to undertaking the part which you have seen, to dabble in the water, to blacken himself, and to allow himself to be bitten.

"Ah! What a wretched thing life is for those who are kind and who have too much heart!"

THE MARQUIS

WHEN that obstinate little Sonia, with the Russian name and Russian caprices, said: "I choose to do it," it was quite useless to remonstrate. She was so delicate and pretty, with her slightly tilted nose and her rosy, childish cheeks, and every female perversity was reflected in the depths of her strange eyes, which were the color of the sea on a stormy evening. Yes, she was very charming, very fantastic, and, above all, so Russian, so deliciously and imperiously Russian, and all the more Russian as she came from Montmartre, and in spite of this, not one of her seven admirers who composed her usual menagerie had laughed when their enslaver said one day:

"You know my feudal castle at Pludun-Herlouët, near Saint-Jacut-de-la-Mer, which I bought

two years ago, and in which I have not yet set foot? Very well, then! The day after to-morrow, which is the first of May, we will have a housewarming there."

The seven had not asked for any further explanation, but had accompanied little Sonia, and were now ready to sit down to dinner under her presidency in the dining-room of the old castle, which was situated ten hours from Paris. They had arrived there that morning; they were going to have dinner and supper together, and start off again at daybreak next morning; such were Sonia's orders, and nobody had made the slightest objection.

Two of her admirers, however, who were not yet used to her sudden whims, had felt some surprise, which was quickly checked by expressions of enthusiastic pleasure on the part of the others.

"What a delightfully original idea! Nobody else would have thought of such things! Positively, nobody else. Oh, these Russians!" But those who had known her for some time, and who had been consequently prepared not to be surprised at anything, found it all quite natural.

It was half-past six in the evening, and the gentlemen were going to dress. Sonia had made up her mind to keep on her morning gown, or if she dressed she would do so later. Just then she was not inclined to move out of her great rocking-chair from which she could see the sun setting over the sea. The sight always delighted her very much. It might have been taken for a large red billiard ball, rebounding from the green cloth. How curious it was! And how lucky that she was all alone to look at it, for those seven would not have understood it at all! Those men never have any soul, have they?

Certainly the sunset was strange at first, but at length it made her sad, and just now Sonia's heart felt almost heavy, though the very sadness was sweet. She was congratulating herself more than ever on being alone, so as to enjoy that languor which was almost like a gentle dream; when, in perfect harmony with that melancholy and sweet sensation, a voice rose from the road, which was overhung by a terrace, a tremulous but fresh and pure voice singing the following words to a slow melody:

"Walking in Paris,
Having my drink,
A friend of mine whispered:
What do you think?
If love makes you thirsty,
Then wine makes you lusty."

The sound died away, as the singer continued on his way, and Sonia was afraid that she should not hear the rest; it was really terrible; so she jumped out of the rocking-chair, ran to the balustrade of the terrace, and, leaning over it, called out: "Sing it again! I insist on it. The song, the whole song!"

On hearing this, the singer looked round and then came back, without hurrying, however, and as if he were prompted by curiosity rather than by any desire to comply with her order. Holding his hand over his eyes, he looked at Sonia attentively, and on her part, she had plenty of time to look closely at him.

He was an old man of about sixty-five, and his rags and the wallet over his shoulder denoted a beggar, but Sonia immediately noticed that there was a certain amount of affectation in his wretchedness.

His hair and beard were not shaggy and ragged, as such men usually wear it, and he evidently had his hair cut occasionally, and had a fine, and even distinguished, face, as Sonia said to herself. But she did not pay much attention to that, as for some time she had noticed that old men at the seaside nearly all looked like gentlemen.

When he got to the foot of the terrace the beggar stopped, and shook his head and said: "Pretty! The little woman is very pretty!" But he did not obey Sonia's order, and she repeated it, almost angrily this time, beating a violent tattoo on the stonework. "The song, the whole song!"

He did not seem to hear, but stood there gaping, with a vacant smile on his face, his head rather inclined toward his left shoulder, a thin stream of saliva trickling from his lips on to his beard, and his looks becoming more and more ardent: "How stupid I am!" Sonia suddenly thought. "Of course he is waiting for something." She felt in her pocket, in which she always carried some gold by way of change, took out a twenty-franc piece, and threw it down to the old man. He, however, did not take any notice of it, but continued looking at her ecstati-

cally, and was only roused from his state of bliss by receiving a handful of gravel which she threw at him, right in his face.

"Do sing!" she exclaimed. "You must, I will have it; I have paid you." And then, still smiling, he picked up the napoleon and threw it back on to the terrace, and said proudly, though in a very gentle voice: "I do not ask for charity, little lady; but if it gives you pleasure, I will sing you the whole song, the whole of it, as often as you please." And he began the song again, in his tremulous voice, which was more tremulous than it had been before, as if he were much affected.

Sonia was overcome, and without knowing why was moved to tears; delighted because the man had spoken to her so familiarly, and rather ashamed at having treated him as a beggar. Her whole being was carried away by the slow rhythm of the melody, which related an old love story, and when he had finished he again looked at her with a smile, and as she was crying he said to her: "I daresay you have a beautiful horse, or a little dog that you are very fond of, which is ill? Take me to it, and I will cure it; I understand it thoroughly. I will do it for nothing, because you are so pretty."

She could not help laughing. "You must not laugh," he said. "What are you laughing at? Because I am poor? But I am not, for I had work yesterday, and again to-day. I have a bag full. See, look here!" And from his belt he drew a leather purse in which coppers rattled. He poured them out into the palm of his hand, and said merrily: "You see, little one, I have a purse. Forty-seven sous; forty-seven!"

"So you won't take my napoleon?" Sonia said.

"Certainly not," he replied. "I do not want it; and then, I tell you again, I will not accept alms. So you do not know me?"

"No, I do not."

"Very well, ask any one in the neighborhood. Everybody will tell you that the Marquis does not live on charity."

The Marquis! At that name she suddenly remembered that two years ago she had heard his story. It was at the time that she bought the property, and the vendor had mentioned the Marquis as one of the curiosities of the soil. He was said to be half silly, at any rate an original, almost in his dotage, living by any lucky bits that he could make as horse trader and veterinary. The peasants gave him a little work, as they feared that he might throw spells over any one who refused to employ him. They also respected him on account of his former wealth and of his title, for he had been rich, very rich, and they said that he really was a Marquis, and it was said that he had ruined himself in Paris by speculating. The reason, of course, was women!

At that moment the dinner bell began to ring, and a wild idea entered Sonia's head. She ran to the little door that opened on to the terrace, overtook the musician, and with a ceremonious bow she said: "Will you do me the pleasure and the honor of dining with me, Marquis?"

The old man left off smiling and grew serious; he put his hand to his forehead, as if to bring old recollections back, and then, with a very formal, old-fashioned bow, he said:

"With pleasure, my dear." And, letting his wallet drop, he offered Sonia his arm.

When she introduced this new guest to her admirers, all the seven, even the best drilled, started. "I see what disturbs you," she said. "It is his dress. Well! It really leaves much to be desired. But wait a moment, that can soon be arranged."

She rang for her lady's maid, and whispered something to her, and then she said: "Marquis, your bath is ready in your dressing-room. If you will follow Sabina she will show you to it. These gentlemen and I will wait dinner for you."

As soon as he had gone out she said to the youngest there: "And now, Ernest, go upstairs and undress; I will allow you to dine in your morning-coat, and you will give your dress-coat and the rest to Sabina for the Marquis."

Ernest was delighted at having to play a part in the piece, and the six others clapped their hands. "Nobody else would have thought of such a thing; nobody, nobody!"

Half an hour later they were sitting at dinner, the Marquis in a dress-coat on Sonia's left, and it was a great disillusion for the seven. They had reckoned on having some fun with him, and Ernest especially, who set up as a wit, had intended to draw him out. But at the first attempt of this sort Sonia had given him a look which they all understood, and dinner began very ceremoniously for the seven, but merrily and without restraint between Sonia and the old man.

They pulled very long faces, those seven, but inwardly, if one can say so, for, of course, they could not dream of showing how put out they were, and those inward long faces grew longer still, when Sonia said to the old fellow, quite suddenly: "I

say, how stupid these gentlemen are! Suppose we leave them to themselves?"

The Marquis rose, offered her his arm again, and said: "Where shall we go?" But Sonia's only reply was to sing the couplet of a song which she remembered.

And the seven, who were altogether dumfounded this time, and who could not conceal their vexation, saw the couple disappear out of the door which led to Sonia's apartments. "Hum!" Ernest ventured to say, "this is really rather too much!" "Yes," the eldest of the menagerie replied. "It certainly is rather peculiar, but it will do! You know there is nobody like her for thinking of such things!"

The next morning the château bell woke them up at six o'clock, when they agreed to return to Paris, and the seven men asked each other whether they should go and wish Sonia good morning, as usual, before she was out of her room. Ernest hesitated more than any of them about it, and it was not until Sabina, her maid, came and told them that her mistress insisted upon it that they could make up their minds to do so, and they were surprised to find Sonia in bed.

"Well!" Ernest asked boldly, "and what about the Marquis?"

"He left very early," Sonia replied.

"A queer sort of Marquis, I must say!" Ernest observed contemptuously, and growing bolder.

"Why, I should like to know?" Sonia replied, drawing herself up. "The man has his own habits, I suppose!"

"Do you know, Madame," Sabina observed, "that he came back half an hour after he left?"

"Ah!" Sonia said, getting up and walking about the room. "He came back? What did he want, I wonder?"

"He did not say, Madame. He merely went upstairs to see you. He was dressed in his old clothes again."

And suddenly Sonia uttered a loud cry, and clapped her hands, and the seven came round to see what had caused her emotion.

"Look here! Just look here!" she cried. "Do look on the mantelpiece! It is really charming! Do look!"

And with a smiling and yet somewhat melancholy expression in her eyes, with a tender look which they could not understand, she showed them a small bunch of wild flowers, by the side of a heap of pennies.

Mechanically she took them up and counted them, and then began to cry.

There were forty-seven of them.

THE MOUNTEBANKS

THE clever manager of the Eden Réunis Theater, as the critics called him, was counting on a great success, and had invested his last franc in the affair, without thinking of the morrow or of the bad luck which had been pursuing him so inexorably for months past. For a whole week the walls, the kiosks, shop windows, and even the trees, had been placarded with flaming posters, and from one end of Paris to the other carriages were to be seen covered with fancy sketches by Chéret, representing two strong, well built men who looked like ancient athletes. The younger of them, who was standing with his arms folded, had the vacant smile of an itinerant mountebank on his face, and the other, who was dressed in what was supposed to be the costume of a Mexican trapper, held a revolver in his hand. There were large type ad-

vertisements in all the papers, that the Montefiores would appear without fail at the Eden Réunis the next Monday.

Nothing else was talked about, for the puff and humbug attracted people. The Montefiores, like fashionable toys, succeeded that whimsical jade Rose Péché, who had gone off the preceding autumn, between the third and fourth acts of the burlesque *Ousca Iscar,* in order to make a study of love in the company of a young fellow of seventeen, who had just entered the university. The novelty and danger of their performance revived and agitated the curiosity of the public, for there seemed to be an implied threat of death, or, at any rate, of wounds and of blood in it, and it seemed as if they defied danger with absolute indifference. And that always pleases women; it holds them and masters them, and they grow pale with emotion and cruel enjoyment. Consequently, all the seats in the large theater were let almost immediately, and were soon taken for several days in advance. And stout Compardin, losing his glass of absinthe over a game of dominos, was in high spirits, and saw the future through rosy glasses, and exclaimed in a loud voice: "I think I have turned up trumps, by George!"

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The Countess Regina de Villegby was lying on the sofa in her boudoir, languidly fanning herself. She had only received three or four intimate friends that day, Saint-Mars Montalvin, Tom Sheffield, and his cousin Madame de Rhouel, a Creole, who laughed as incessantly as a bird sings. It was growing dusk, and the distant rumbling of the carriages in the Champs-Elysées sounded like some somnolent

rhythm. There was a delicate perfume of flowers; the lamps had not been brought in yet, and chatting and laughing they filled the room with a confused noise.

"Would you pour out the tea?" the Countess said suddenly, touching Saint-Mars's fingers with her fan. He was beginning a conversation in a low voice, and while he slowly filled the little china cup, he continued: "Are the Montefiores as good as the lying newspapers make out?"

Then Tom Sheffield and the others all joined in.

They had never seen anything like it, they declared; it was most exciting, and made one shiver unpleasantly, as when the *espada* comes to close quarters with the infuriated brute at a bullfight.

Countess Regina listened in silence and nibbled the petals of a tea-rose.

"How I should like to see them!" giddy Madame de Rhouel exclaimed.

"Unfortunately, cousin," the Countess said, in the solemn tones of a preacher, "a respectable woman dare not let herself be seen in improper places."

They all agreed with her; nevertheless, Madame de Villegby was present at the Montefiores' performance two days later at the back of a stage box, dressed all in black, and wearing a thick veil.

And that woman, who was as cold as a steel buckler and who had married as soon as she left the convent in which she had been at school, without any affection or even liking for her husband, and whom the most skeptical respected as a saint, had a look of virgin purity on her calm face as she went down the steps of the Madeleine on Sundays, after high mass.

Countess Regina stretched herself nervously, grew pale, and vibrated like the strings of a violin on which an artist has been playing some wild symphony, and inhaled the nasty smell of the sawdust, as if it had been the perfume of a bouquet of unknown flowers, and clinched her hands, and gazed eagerly at the two mountebanks, whom the public applauded rapturously at every feat. And, contemptuously and haughtily, she compared those two men, who were as vigorous as wild animals that have grown up in the open air, with the rickety limbs that looked so awkward in the dress of the English huntsman who had tried to awaken her heart!

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Count de Villegby had gone back to the country to prepare for his election as Councilor General, and the very evening that he started Regina again took the stage box at the Eden Réunis. Intoxicated as if by some love philter, she scribbled a few words on a piece of paper—the eternal formula that women write on such occasions:

"A carriage will be waiting for you at the stage door after the performance—An unknown woman who adores you."

And she gave it to an usher, who handed it to the Montefiore who was the champion pistol shot.

Oh! that interminable waiting in a malodorous cab, the overwhelming emotion, and the nausea of disgust, the fear, the desire of waking the coachman who was nodding on the box, of giving him her address, and telling him to drive her home. But she remained with her face against the window, mechanically looking at the dark passage, that was illumi-

nated by a gas lamp, at the "actors' entrance," through which men were continually hurrying, talking in a loud voice, and chewing the end of a cigar which had gone out. She remained as if she were glued to the cushions, and tapped impatiently on the bottom of the cab with her heels.

When the actor, who thought it was a joke, made his appearance, she could hardly utter a word, for impure thoughts are as intoxicating as adulterated liquor. She raised her veil to show how young, beautiful, and desirable she was. He admired her and promised to meet her. But she soon wearied of him and began to flirt with his partner.

Through it all she maintained her serene expression which she wore on Sundays after mass.

The partner was very sentimental, and his head was full of romance. He thought the unknown woman, who merely used him as her plaything, really loved him, and he was not satisfied with clandestine meetings. He questioned her, besought her, and the Countess made fun of him. Then she flirted with each in turn. They did not know it, for she had forbidden them ever to talk about her to each other, under the penalty of never seeing her again, and one day the younger of them said with humble tenderness, as he knelt at her feet:

"How kind you are to love me and to want me! I thought that such happiness only existed in novels, and that ladies of rank only made fun of poor strolling mountebanks like us!"

Regina knitted her golden brows.

"Do not be angry," he continued, "because I followed you and found out where you lived, and your real name, and that you are a Countess, and rich, very rich."

"You fool!" she exclaimed, trembling with anger. "People can make you believe things as easily as they can a child!"

She had had enough of him; he knew her name and might compromise her. The Count might possibly come back from the country before the elections. She no longer had any feeling, any desire for those two admirers, whom a fillip from her rosy fingers could bend to her will. It was time to seek for fresh amusement elsewhere.

"Listen to me," she said to the champion shot, the next night, "I would rather not hide anything from you. I like your comrade very much better than I do you, and I do not want to have anything more to do with you."

"My comrade!" he repeated.

He uttered a furious cry and rushed at Regina with clinched fists. She thought he was going to strike her, and closed her eyes, but he had not the courage, so in despair and with bowed head he said hoarsely:

"Very well, we shall not meet again, since it is your wish."

The house at the Eden Réunis was full to overflowing. The violins were playing a soft and delightful waltz of Gungl's, which the reports of a revolver accentuated.

The Montefiores were standing opposite one another as in Chéret's picture, about a dozen yards apart, and an electric light was thrown on the younger, who was leaning against a large white target, while very slowly the other traced his outline with bullet after bullet. He aimed with prodigious skill, and the black dots on the cardboard marked the shape of his body. The applause

drowned the orchestra and increased continually, when suddenly a shrill cry of horror resounded from one end of the hall to the other. The women fainted, the violins stopped, and the spectators jostled each other. At the ninth ball the younger brother had fallen to the ground an inert mass, with a gaping wound in his forehead. His brother did not move, and tl ere was a look of madness on his face, while the Countess de Villegby leaned on the ledge of her box and fanned herself calmly, as unmoved as any cruel goddess of ancient mythology.

The next day, between four and five, when she was surrounded by her usual friends in her little, warm Japanese drawing-room, it seemed strange to hear in what a languid and indifferent voice she exclaimed:

"They say that an accident happened to one of those famous clowns, the Monta . . . the Monti . . . what is his name, Tom?"

"The Montefiores, Madame!"

And then they began to talk about the sale by Angèle Velours, at the Hôtel Drouot, before she married Prince Storbeck. She was going to buy the former *Folies*.

A NIGHT IN WHITECHAPEL

TEDANTEC and I were twenty-five, and we had come to London for the first time in our lives. It was a cold, foggy Saturday evening in December, and I think that is more than enough to explain why my friend and I were most abominably drunk, though, to tell the truth, we did not feel any discomfort from it. On the contrary, we were floating in an atmosphere of perfect bliss. We did not talk, certainly, for we were incapable of doing so, but then we had no inclination for conversation. What would be the good of it? We could so easily read all our thoughts in each other's eyes! And our thoughts consisted in the sweet and unique knowledge that we were thinking about nothing whatever.

It was not, however, in order to arrive at that state of delicious, intellectual inanity that we had gone to mysterious Whitechapel. We had gone into

the first public house we saw, with the firm intention of studying manners and customs—not to mention morals—as spectators, artists, and philosophers; but in the second public house we entered we ourselves became like the objects of our investigations, that is to say, sponges soaked in alcohol. Between one public house and the other the outer air seemed to squeeze those sponges, which then got just as dry as before, and thus we rolled from public house to public house, until at last the sponges could not hold any more.

Consequently, we had for some time bidden farewell to our study of morals, and our outlook was more limited to two impressions: zigzagging through the darkness outside, and the gleam of light inside the public houses. As to the imbibing of brandies, whiskies, and gins, that was done mechanically, and our stomachs scarcely noticed it.

But what strange beings we had elbowed against during our long halts! What a number of faces to be remembered, what clothes, what attitudes, what talk, and what rags!

At first we tried to note them exactly in our memory, but there were so many of them, and our brain got muddled so quickly, that at present we had no very clear recollection of anything or anybody. Even objects that were immediately before us appeared to us in a vague, dusky phantasmagoria and became confounded with precious objects in an inextricable manner. The world became to us a sort of kaleidoscope, seen in a dream through the penumbra of an aquarium.

Suddenly we were aroused from this state of somnolence, awakened as if by a blow on the chest, and imperiously forced to fix our attention on what we saw, for amid this whirl of strange sights, one stranger than all attracted our eyes and seemed to say to us: "Look at me."

It was at the open door of a public house. A ray of light streamed into the street through the half-open door, and that brutal ray fell right on the specter that had just risen up there, dumb and motionless.

For it was indeed a specter, pitiful and terrible, and, above all, most real as it stood out boldly against the dark background of the street, which seemed still darker behind it!

Young, yes; the woman was certainly young; there could be no doubt about that, when one looked at her smooth skin, her smiling mouth which showed her white teeth, and her firm bust, which could be plainly noted under her thin dress.

But then how explain her perfectly white hair, not gray or growing gray, but absolutely white, as white as any octogenarian's?

And then her eyes, her eyes beneath her smooth brow, were surely the eyes of an old woman? Cer-

tainly they were, and of a woman one could not tell how old, for it must have taken years of trouble and sorrow, of tears and of sleepless nights, and a whole long existence, thus to dull, to wear out, and to spoil those glassy orbs.

Glassy? Not exactly that. For granulated glass still retains a dull and milky brightness, a recollection, as it were, of its former transparency. But her eyes seemed rather to have been made of metal which had turned rusty, and really if pewter could rust I should have compared them to pewter covered with rust. They had the dead color of pewter, and at the same time they emitted a glance which was the color of reddish water.

But it was not until some time later that I tried to define them thus approximately by retrospective analysis. At that moment, being altogether incapable of such an effort, I could only establish in my own mind the idea of extreme decrepitude and horrible old age which they produced in my imagination.

Have I said that they were set in very puffy eyelids, which had no lashes whatever, and on her forehead without wrinkles there was not a vestige of eyebrow? When I tell you this, and considering their dull look beneath the hair of an octogenarian, it is not surprising that Ledantec and I said in a low voice at the sight of this woman, who was evidently young:

"Oh! poor, poor old woman!"

Her great age was further accentuated by the terrible poverty that was revealed by her dress. If she had been better dressed, her youthful looks would, perhaps, have struck us more, but her thin shawl, which was all that she had over her chemise,

her single petticoat, which was full of holes and almost in rags, and which did not nearly reach to her bare feet, her straw hat with ragged feathers and with ribbons of no particular color through age, it all seemed so ancient, so prodigiously antique!

From what remote, superannuated, abolished period did they all spring? One did not venture to guess, and by a perfectly natural association of ideas, one seemed to infer that the unfortunate creature herself was as old as her clothes were. Now, by *one* I mean Ledantec and myself; that is to say, two men who were abominably drunk, and who were arguing with the special logic of intoxication.

It was also under the softening influence of alcohol that we looked at the vague smile on those lips, revealing the teeth of a child, without stopping to reflect on the beauty of those youthful teeth, and seeing nothing except her fixed and almost idiotic smile, which no longer contrasted with the dull expression of her looks, but, on the contrary, accentuated it. For, in spite of her teeth, it was the smile of an old woman in our imagination, and as for me, I was really pleased at the thought of being so acute when I inferred that this grandmother with such pale lips had a set of teeth of a young girl, and still, thanks to the softening influence of alcohol, I was not angry with her for this artifice. I even thought it particularly praiseworthy, since, after all, the poor creature thus carried out her calling conscientiously, which was to seduce us. For there was no possible doubt about the matter, that this grandmother was nothing more nor less than a prostitute.

And then, drunk! Horribly drunk, much more drunk than Ledantec and I were, for we really could

manage to say: "Oh! Pity the poor, poor old woman!" while she was incapable of articulating a single syllable, of making a gesture, or even of imparting a gleam of promise, a furtive flash of allurement to her eyes. With her hands crossed on her stomach, and leaning against the front of the public house, with her whole body as stiff as if she had been in a state of catalepsy, she had nothing alluring about her, except her sad smile, and that inspired us with all the more pity because she was even more drunk than we were; and so, by an identical, spontaneous movement, we each of us seized her by an arm, to take her into the public house with us.

To our great astonishment, she resisted, sprang back, and so was in the shadow again, out of the ray of light which came through the door, while at the same time she began to walk through the darkness and to drag us with her, for she was clinging to our arms. We followed her without speaking and without knowing where we were going, but without the least uneasiness on that score. Only, when she suddenly burst into violent sobs as she walked, Ledantec and I began to sob in unison.

The cold and the fog had suddenly congested our brains again, and we had again lost all precise consciousness of our acts, of our thoughts, and of our sensations. Our sobs had nothing of grief in them, but we were floating in an atmosphere of perfect bliss, and I can remember that at that moment it was no longer the exterior world which seemed to me as if I were looking at it through the penumbra of an aquarium; it was I myself, an *I* composed of three, which was changing into something that was floating adrift in something, though what it was I

did not know, composed of palpable fog and intangible water, and it was exquisitely delightful.

From that moment I remember nothing more until what follows, which had the effect of a clap of thunder on me, and made me rise up from the bottom of the depth to which I had descended.

Ledantec was standing in front of me, his face convulsed with horror, his hair standing on end, and his eyes staring out of his head, as he shouted to me:

"Let us escape! Let us escape!" Whereupon I opened my eyes wide, and found myself lying on the floor in a room into which the daylight was shining. I saw some rags hanging against the wall, two chairs, a broken jug lying on the floor by my side, and in a corner a wretched bed, on which a woman was lying. She was doubtless dead, for her head was hanging over the side, and her long, white hair reached almost to my feet.

With a bound I was on my feet, like Ledantec.

"What!" I said to him, while my teeth chattered: "Did you kill her?"

"No, no," he replied. "But that makes no difference; let us be off."

I felt completely sober by this time, but I did think that he was still suffering somewhat from the effects of last night's drunk; otherwise, why should he wish to escape? Some remains of pity for the unfortunate woman forced me to say:

"What is the matter with her? If she is ill, we must look after her."

And I went to the wretched bed, in order to put her head back on the pillow, but I discovered that she was neither dead nor ill, but only sound asleep, and I also noticed that she was quite young.

She still wore that idiotic smile, but her teeth were her own and those of a girl. Her smooth skin and her firm bust showed that she was not more than sixteen, perhaps not so much.

"There! You see it, you can see it!" Ledantec said. "Let us be off."

He tried to drag me out, and he was still drunk; I could see it by his feverish movements, his trembling hands, and his nervous looks. Then he implored me, and said:

"I slept beside the old woman; but she is not old. Look at her; look at her; yes, she is old, after all!"

And he lifted up her long hair by handfuls; it was like handfuls of white silk, and then he added, evidently in a sort of delirium, which made me fear an attack of delirium tremens: "To think that I have begotten children, three, four children, who knows how many children, all in one night! And they were born immediately, and have grown up already! Let us be off."

Decidedly it was an attack of madness. Poor Ledantec! What could I do for him? I took his arm and tried to calm him, but he thought that I was going to try and make him go to bed with her again, and he pushed me away and exclaimed with tears in his voice: "If you do not believe me, look under the bed; the children are there; they are there, I tell you. Look here, just look here."

He threw himself down, flat on his stomach, and actually pulled out one, two, three, four children, who had hidden under the bed. I do not exactly know whether they were boys or girls, but all, like the sleeping woman, had white hair, the hair of an octogenarian.

Was I still drunk, like Ledantec, or was I mad? What was the meaning of this strange hallucination? I hesitated a moment, and shook myself to be sure that it was I.

No, no, I had all my wits about me, and I in reality saw that bunch of horrible little brats; they were all covering their faces with their hands, and were crying and squalling, and then, suddenly, one of them jumped on the bed; all the others followed his example, and the woman woke up.

And then we stood, while those five pairs of eyes, without eyebrows or eyelashes, eyes the dull color of pewter, with irises the color of red water, were steadily fixed on us.

"Let us be off! Let us be off!" Ledantec repeated, letting go of me, and this time I paid attention to what he said, and, after throwing some small change on the floor, I followed him, to make him understand, when he should be quite sober, that he saw before him a poor Albino prostitute, who had several brothers and sisters.

THE REAL ONE AND THE OTHER

"WELL, well," said Chasseval, as he stood with his back to the fire, "how could any of those respectable shopkeepers and winegrowers ever believe that that pretty little Parisian woman, with her soft, innocent eyes, like those of a Madonna, with such smiling lips and golden hair, who always dressed so simply, was not their candidate's wife?"

She was a wonderful help to him, and accompanied him even to the most outlying farms; went to the meetings in the small village cafés and had a pleasant and suitable word for every one, and did not recoil at a glass of mulled wine or a grip of the hand, and was always ready to join in a *farandole*. She seemed to be so in love with Elieane Rulhière, to trust him so entirely, to be so proud of forming half of his life, and of belong-

ing to him, gave him such looks full of happiness and love, and listened to all he said so intently, that voters who might have hesitated allowed themselves by degrees to be talked over and persuaded, and promised their votes to the young doctor, whose name they had never heard mentioned in the district before.

That electoral campaign had been like a truant's escapade for Jane Dardenne; it was a delightful and unexpected holiday, and as she was an actress at heart, she played her part seriously, and threw herself into her character, and enjoyed herself more than she ever enjoyed herself in her most adventurous outings.

And then there came in the pleasure of being taken for a woman of good standing, of being flattered, respected, and envied, and of getting out of the usual groove for a time, and also the dream that at the end of this journey of a few weeks her lover would not separate from her on their return, but would sacrifice the woman whom he no longer loved, and whom he ironically used to call his Cinderella, to her.

At night, when they had laid aside all pretence, and were alone in their room in the hotel, she coaxed him and flattered him, spurred his ambition, threw her arms round him, and amid her kisses, whispered those words that are as wine to a man's heart.

Between them they captured the district and won the election easily; and in spite of his youth, Elieane Rulhière was elected by a majority of five thousand. Then, of course, there were more fêtes and banquets, at which Jane was present, and where she was received with enthusiastic shouts; there were fireworks, when she was obliged to set off

the first rocket, and balls, at which she astonished those worthy people by her affability. And when they left, three little girls dressed in white, as if they were going to be confirmed, came on the platform and recited some complimentary verses to her while the band played the *Marseillaise* and the women waved their pocket-handkerchiefs and the men their hats, and as she leaned out of the carriage window, looking charming in her traveling costume, with a smile on her lips and with moist eyes, as was fitting at such a pathetic leavetaking, actress as she was, with a sudden and childlike gesture, she blew kisses to them from the tips of her fingers, and said:

"Good-by, my friends, good-by, only for the present; I shall never forget you!"

The Deputy, who was also very effusive, had invited his principal supporters to come and see him in Paris, as there were plenty of excursion trains. They all took him at his word, and Rulhière was obliged to invite them all to dinner.

In order to avoid any possible mishaps, he gave his wife a foretaste of their guests. He told her that they were rather noisy, talkative, and unpolished, and that they would, no doubt, astonish her by their manners and their accent, but that, as they had great influence and were excellent men, they deserved a good reception. It was a very useful precaution, for when they came into the drawing-room in their new clothes, expanding with pleasure, and with their hair pomatumed as if they had been going to a country wedding, they felt inclined to fall down before the new Madame Rulhière, to whom the Deputy introduced them, and who seemed to be perfectly at home there.

At first they were embarrassed, felt uncomfortable and out of place, did not know what to say, and had to seek for words; they buttoned and unbuttoned their gloves, answered her questions at random, and racked their brains to discover the solution of the enigma. Captain Mouredus looked at the fire with the fixed gaze of a somnambulist, Marius Barbaste scratched his fingers mechanically, while the three others, the factory manager, Casemajel, Roquetton, the lawyer, and Dustugue, the hotel proprietor, looked at Rulhière anxiously.

The lawyer was the first to recover himself. He got up from his armchair laughing heartily, dug the Deputy in the ribs with his elbow, and said:

"I understand it all, I understand it; you thought that people do not come to Paris to be bored, eh? Madame is delightful, and I congratulate you, Monsieur."

He gave a wink, and made signs behind his back to his friends, and then the captain had his turn.

"We are not boobies, and that fellow Roquetton is the most knowing of the lot of us. Ah! Monsieur Rulhière, without any exaggeration, you are the best of good fellows."

And, with a flushed face and expanding his chest, he said sonorously:

"They certainly turn them out very pretty in your part of the country, my little lady!"

Madame Rulhière, who did not know what to say, had gone up to her husband for protection; but she felt much inclined to go to her own room under some pretext or other, in order to escape from her intolerable task. She kept her ground, however, during the whole of dinner, which was a noisy, jovial meal, during which the five electors,

with their elbows on the table and their waistcoats unbuttoned, and half drunk, told coarse stories and swore like troopers. But as the coffee and the liqueurs were served in the smoking-room, she took leave of her guests in an impatient voice, and went to her own room with the hasty step of an escaped prisoner who is afraid of being retaken.

The electors sat staring after her with gaping mouths, and Mouredus lit a cigar and said:

"Just listen to me, Monsieur Rulhière: it was very kind of you to invite us here to your little quiet establishment, but to speak to you frankly, I should not, in your place, wrong my lawful wife for such a stuck-up piece of goods as this one is."

"The captain is quite right," Roquetton, the notary, opined; "Madame Rulhière, the lawful Madame Rulhière, is much more amiable and altogether nicer. You are a scoundrel to deceive her; but when may we hope to see her?"

And with a paternal grimace he added:

"But do not be uneasy, we will all hold our tongue; it would be too sad if she were to find it out."

CHARM OF THE STABLE

THREE society women were sitting on a bench in the shade of some pine trees at Ischl, and were talking incidentally of their preference for all sorts of odors.

One of the ladies, Princess F——, a slim, handsome brunette, declared there was nothing like the smell of Russia leather. She wore dull-brown Russia leather boots, a Russia leather dress supporter, to keep her petticoats out of the dirt and dust, a Russia leather belt which spanned her wasp-like waist, carried a Russia leather purse, and even wore a brooch and bracelet of gilt Russia leather. People declared that her bedroom was papered with Russia leather, and that her young gallants were obliged to wear high Russia leather boots and tight breeches, but that on the other hand, her husband was excused from wearing anything at all in Russia leather.

Countess H——, a very stout lady, who had formerly been very beautiful and of a very loving nature, after the fashion of her time, *à la* Parthenia and Griseldis, could not get over the vulgar taste of the young Princess. All she cared for was the smell of hay, and she it was who brought the scent new-mown hay into fashion. Her ideal was a freshly mown field in the moonlight, and when she rolled slowly along she seemed like a moving hay-stack and exhaled an odor of hay all about her.

The third lady's taste was even more peculiar than Countess H——'s, and more vulgar than the Princess's, for the small, delicate, light-haired Countess W—— lived only for—the smell of stables! Her friends could absolutely not understand this; the Princess raised her beautiful, full arm with its broad bracelet to her Grecian nose and inhaled the sweet smell of the Russia leather, while the sentimental hayrick exclaimed over and over again:

"How dreadful! What dost thou say to it, chaste moon?"

The delicate little Countess seemed very much embarrassed at the effect that her confession had had, and tried to justify her taste.

"Prince T—— told me that that smell had quite bewitched him once," she said; "it was in a Jewish town in Galicia, where he was quartered once with his hussar regiment, and a number of poor, ragged circus riders, with half-starved horses, came from Russia and put up a circus with a few poles and some rags of canvas, and the Prince went to see them, and found a woman among them who was neither young nor beautiful, but bold and impudent; and this woman wore a faded, bright red jacket trimmed with old, shabby imitation ermine, and that

jacket stank of the stable, as the Prince expressed it, and she bewitched him with that odor, so that every time he saw her, and she smelt abominably of the stable, he felt as if he were magnetized."

"How disgusting!" both the other ladies said, and involuntarily held their noses.

"What dost thou say to it, chaste moon?" the haystack said with a sigh, and the little light-haired Countess was abashed, and held her tongue.

At the beginning of the winter season the three friends were together again in the gay imperial city on the blue Danube. One morning the Princess accidentally met the enthusiast of hay at the house of the little, light-haired Countess, and the two ladies were obliged to go after her to her private riding-school, where she was taking her daily lesson. As soon as she saw them she came up and beckoned her riding master to her to help her out of the saddle. He was a young man of extremely good and athletic build, which was set off by his tight breeches and his short velvet coat, and he ran up and took his lovely burden into his arms with visible pleasure to help her off the quiet, perfectly broken horse.

When the ladies looked at the handsome, vigorous man, it was quite enough to explain their little friend's predilection for the smell of a stable; but when the latter saw their looks she blushed up to the roots of her hair, and her only way out of the difficulty was to order the riding master, in a very authoritative manner, to take the horse back to the stable. He merely bowed with an indescribable smile, and obeyed her.

A few months afterward Viennese society was alarmed at the news that Countess W—— had been divorced from her husband. The event was all the

more unexpected as they had apparently always lived very happily together, and nobody was able to mention any man on whom she had bestowed even the most passing attention, beyond the requirements of politeness.

Long afterward, however, a strange report became current. A chattering lady's maid declared that the handsome riding master had once so far forgotten himself as to strike the Countess with his riding whip; a groom had told the Count of the occurrence, and when he was going to call the insolent fellow to account for it the Countess placed herself before him, and thus gave occasion for the divorce.

Years had passed since then and the Countess H—— had grown stouter and more sentimental. Ischl and hayricks were not enough for her any longer; she spent the winter on lovely Lago Maggiore, where she walked among laurel bushes and cypress trees and was rowed about on the warm moonlight nights.

One evening she was returning home in the company of an English lady, who was also a great lover of nature, from Isola Bella, when they met a beautiful private boat in which a very unusual couple were sitting—a small, delicate, light-haired woman, wrapped in a white burnous, and a handsome, athletic man, in tight white breeches, a short black velvet coat trimmed with sable, a red fez on his head, and a riding whip in his hand.

Countess K—— involuntarily uttered a loud exclamation.

"What is the matter?" the English lady asked. "Do you know those people?"

"Certainly! She is a Viennese lady," Countess H—— whispered; "Countess W——"

"Oh! Indeed, you are quite mistaken; it is a Count Savelli and his wife. They are a handsome couple, don't you think so?"

When the boat came nearer she saw that it was indeed little Countess W——, and that the handsome man was her former riding master, whom she had married and for whom she had bought a Papal title; and as the two boats passed each other the short sable cloak, which was thrown carelessly over his shoulders, exhaled, like the old cat's-skin jacket of that impudent female circus rider, a strong odor of the stable.

UGLY

IN this blessed era of equality, mediocrity, of rectangular abomination, as Poe says, in this delightful age when every one tries to resemble every one else, so that it is impossible to distinguish the President of the Republic from a waiter; in these days, the forerunners of that future blissful time when everything in this world will be of a dull, neutral uniformity, in such an age one has the privilege, or, rather, it is one's duty, to be ugly.

He, however, assuredly exercised that privilege to the fullest extent, and he fulfilled that duty with the fiercest heroism, and to make matters worse, the mysterious irony of fate had caused him to be born with the name of Lebeau, while an ingenious godfather, the unconscious accomplice of the pranks of destiny, had given him the Christian name of Antinoüs.

Even among our contemporaries who were al-

ready on the high road to the coming ideal of universal ugliness, Antinoüs Lebeau was remarkable for his ugliness, and one might have said that he positively threw zeal, too much zeal, into the matter, though he was not hideous like Mirabeau, who made people exclaim: "Oh, the beautiful monster!"

Alas! No. He was without any beauty, even the beauty of ugliness. He was ugly, that was all, nothing more nor less; in short, he was uglily ugly. He was not humpbacked nor knock-kneed nor potbellied; his legs were not like a pair of tongs, and his arms were neither too long nor too short, and yet, there was an utter lack of uniformity about him, not only in painters' eyes, but also in everybody's, for nobody could meet him in the street without turning to look after him and thinking: "Good heavens! what an object!"

His hair was of no particular color, a light chestnut mixed with yellow. There was not much of it, but still he was not absolutely bald, though bald enough to allow his butter-colored pate to show. Butter-colored? Hardly! The color of margarine would be more applicable, and such pale margarine!

His face was also like margarine, but like adulterated margarine. By the side of it his cranium, the color of unadulterated margarine, looked almost like butter in comparison.

There was very little to say about his mouth! Less than little; the sum total was—nothing. It was a chimerical mouth.

But let us suppose that I have said nothing about him and replace this vain description by the useful formula: Impossible to describe. But you must

not forget that Antinoüs Lebeau was ugly, that the fact impressed everybody as soon as they saw him, and that nobody remembered ever having seen an uglier person; and let us add that as the climax of his misfortune he knew it.

From this you will see that he was not a fool; neither was he of a bad disposition; but, of course, he was unhappy. An unhappy man thinks only of his wretchedness, and people take his nightcap for a fool's cap, while, on the other hand, goodness is only esteemed when it is cheerful. Consequently Antinoüs Lebeau passed for a fool, and an ill-tempered fool, and he was not even pitied because he was so ugly!

He had only one pleasure in life, and that was to go and roam about the darkest streets on dark nights and to hear some unfortunate creature say:

"Come with me, you handsome dark man!"

It was, alas! a furtive pleasure, and he knew that it was not true. For occasionally, when the woman was old or drunk and he profited by the invitation, as soon as they came under a street lamp they no longer murmured the fallacious *handsome dark man;* and when they saw him the old women grew still older, and the drunken women got sober. And more than one, although hardened against disgust and ready for all risks, said to him, and in spite of his liberal treatment:

"My little man, you are most confoundedly ugly, I must say."

At last, however, he renounced even that lamentable pleasure when he heard the still more lamentable words which a wretched woman could not help uttering when he accosted her:

"Well, he must be very hungry!"

Alas! He was a hungry, unhappy man; hungry for love, for something that should resemble love, were it ever so little; he longed not to love like a pariah any more, not to be exiled and proscribed in his ugliness. And the ugliest, the most repugnant woman would have appeared beautiful to him if she would only have consented not to think him ugly, or, at any rate, not to tell him so, and not to let him see that she felt horror at him on that account.

The consequence was that when he one day met a poor, blear-eyed creature with her face covered with scabs and bearing evident signs of alcoholism, with a driveling mouth and ragged and filthy skirts, to whom he gave liberal alms, for which she kissed his hand, he took her home with him, had her dressed in clean clothes, and taken care of, made her his servant and then his housekeeper. Next he raised her to his own position, and, finally, of course, he married her.

She was almost as ugly as he was! She really was; but only almost. Almost, but certainly not quite; for she was hideous, and her hideousness had its charm and its beauty, no doubt; that something by which a woman can attract a man. And she had proved that by deceiving him, and she let him see it better still by leading astray another man.

That other was actually uglier than Lebeau.

He was certainly uglier, that collection of every physical and moral ugliness, that companion of beggars whom she had picked up among her former vagrant associates, that jailbird, that vagabond covered with filth, with legs like a toad's, with a mouth like a lamprey, and a death's head in which the nose had been replaced by two holes.

"And you have wronged me with a wretch like that," the poor, deceived man said. "And why, why, you wretch? Why, seeing that he is uglier than I am?"

"Oh! no," she exclaimed. "You may say what you like, that I am a dirty low creature, but do not say that he is uglier than you are."

And the unhappy man stood there, vanquished and overcome by her last words, which she uttered without understanding all the horror which he would feel at them.

"Because, you see, he has his own particular ugliness, while you are merely ugly like everybody else is."

UNDER THE YOKE

BEING of a simple and affectionate disposition, with quiet, regular habits and nothing to disturb the even tenor of his life, Monsieur de Loubancourt suffered at the loss of his wife more than is the case with most men. He regretted his lost happiness, blamed fate which separated united couples so brutally, and which chose a tranquil existence whose sleepy quietude had not hitherto been troubled by any cares or deceptions to rob it of its happiness.

Had he been younger he might perhaps have been tempted to start anew, to fill up the vacant place, and to marry again. But when a man is nearly sixty such ideas make people laugh, for they have something ridiculous and insane about them; and so he dragged on his dull and weary existence, escaped from all those familiar objects which constantly recalled the past to him, and went from hotel to hotel without taking an interest in anything, without becoming intimate

with any one, even temporarily; inconsolable, silent, almost enigmatical, and looking funereal in his eternal black clothes.

He was generally alone, though on rare occasions he was accompanied by his only son, who used to yawn by stealth, and who seemed to be mentally counting the hours, as if he were performing some hateful, enforced duty.

Two years of this crystallization passed, and one was as monotonous and as void of incident as the other.

One evening, however, in a boarding house at Cannes, where he was staying on his wanderings, a young woman dressed in mourning was among the new arrivals, and sat next to him at dinner. She had a sad, pale face, that told of suffering, a beautiful figure, and large blue eyes with deep rings round them, but which, nevertheless, looked like the first stars which shine in the twilight.

All remarked her, and although he usually took no notice of women, no matter who they were, ugly or pretty, he looked at her and listened to her. He felt less lonely by her side, though he did not know why. He trembled with instinctive and confused happiness, just as if in some distant country he had found some female friend or relative who at last would understand him, tell him some news, and talk to him in his dear native tongue about everything that a man leaves behind him when he exiles himself from home.

What strange affinity had thrown them together thus? What secret forces had brought their grief in contact? What made him so sanguine and so calm, and incited him to take her suddenly into his confidence, and aroused his curiosity?

She was an experienced traveler, who had no illusions, and was in search of adventure; one of those women who have many aliases, and who, as they have made up their mind to swindle if luck is not on their side, act a continual part; an adventuress who could assume every accent; who to carry out her plans transformed herself into a Slav, into an American, or simply into a provincial; who was ready to take part in any comedy in order to make money and not be obliged to waste her strength and her brains on fruitless struggles or on wretched expedients. Thus she immediately guessed the state of this melancholy sexagenarian's mind and the illusions which attracted him to her, and scented the spoils which offered themselves to her cupidity without her seeking, and divined under what guise she ought to show herself, to make herself acceptable and loved.

She initiated him into depths of griefs unknown to him, by phrases cut short by sighs, by fragments of her story, which she finished with a despairing shrug of the shoulders and a sad smile, thus insensibly awakening his emotions. In a word, she triumphed over the last remaining doubts which might still have mingled with the affectionate pity with which that poor, solitary heart overflowed.

And so, for the first time since he had become a widower, the old man confided in another person, poured out his old heart into that soul which seemed to be so like his own, which seemed to offer him a refuge where he could be comforted, and where the wounds of his heart could be healed, and he longed to throw himself into those sisterly arms, to dry his tears, and to assuage his grief.

* * * * * * *

Monsieur de Loubancourt, who had married at twenty-five, as much for love as for reasons of prudence, had lived quietly and peacefully in the country, much more than in Paris. He was ignorant of the wiles of female tempters, and offered to creatures like Wanda Pulska, who was made up of lies and cared only for pleasure, a virgin soil on which any seed will grow.

She attached herself to him, became his shadow, and by degrees part of his life. She appeared to be a charitable woman who devoted herself to an unhappy man, who endeavored to console him, and who, in spite of her youth, was willing to be the inseparable companion of the old man in his slow daily walks. She never appeared to tire of his anecdotes and reminiscences, and she played cards with him. She waited on him carefully when he was confined to his room, appeared to be perfectly modest, and transformed herself; and, though she handled him skilfully, she seemed ingenuous and ignorant of evil. She acted like an innocent young girl who had just been confirmed; but for all that she chose dangerous hours and special places in which to be sentimental and to ask questions which agitated and disconcerted him, and she abandoned her slender fingers to his feverish hands, which pressed and held them in a tender clasp.

She gained such an influence over the old man that he one day made his will in her favor.

Informed, perhaps, by anonymous letters, or astonished because his father kept him altogether at a distance from him, and gave no signs of life, Monsieur de Loubancourt's son joined them in Provence. But Wanda Pulska, who had been preparing for that attack, waited for it fearlessly.

She was somewhat disturbed at that sudden visit, but was very charming and affable toward the newcomer, whom she reassured by her careless airs of a girl who took life as it came, and who was suffering from the consequences of a fault, but did not trouble her head about the future.

He envied his father, and grudged him such a treasure. Although he had come to combat her dangerous influence, and to treat the woman who had monopolized his father and who governed him as his sovereign as an enemy, he shrank from his task, lost his head, and thought of nothing but of supplanting the old man.

She managed him even more easily than she had managed Monsieur de Loubancourt, molded him just as she chose, made him her tool, without even giving him the tips of her fingers or granting him the slightest favor, induced him to commit so many imprudences that the old man grew jealous, watched them, discovered the intrigue, and found wild letters in which his son was angry, begged, threatened, and implored by turns.

One evening, when she knew that the old man had come in and was hiding in a dark cupboard in order to watch them, Wanda happened to be alone in the drawing-room, which was full of light, of beautiful flowers, with this young fellow of five-and-twenty. He threw himself at her feet and declared his love, and besought her to run away with him, and when she tried to bring him to reason and repulsed him, and told him in a loud and very distinct voice how she loved Monsieur de Loubancourt, he seized her wrists with brutal violence, maddened with passion, and stammered words of love.

"Let me go," she said; "let me go immediately.

You are a brute to take advantage of a woman like that. Please let me go, or I shall call the servants to my assistance."

The next moment the old man, terrible in his wrath, rushed out of his hiding place with clinched fists, his face distorted with rage, threw himself on the startled son, and, pointing to the door with a superb gesture, he said:

"You are a dirty scoundrel, sir. Get out of my house immediately, and never let me see you again!"

* * * * * * *

The comedy was over. Grateful for such fidelity and real affection, Monsieur de Loubancourt married Wanda Pulska, whose name appeared on the civil register as Frida Krubstein—a detail of no importance to a man who was in love; she came from Saxony and had been a servant at an inn. Then he disinherited his son, as far as he could.

And now that she is a respectable and respected widow, Madame de Loubancourt is received everywhere by society in those places of winter resort where people's bygone history is so rarely investigated; and when women bear a name, are pretty, and can waltz—as the Germans can—they are always well received.

THE UPSTART

DUPONTEL, you know, good-natured and stout, the type of a happy man, his fat cheeks red as ripe apples, his small, sandy mustache curling up over his thick lips, his prominent eyes that show no emotion or sorrow, and remind one of the calm eyes of a cow, or an ox, and his long body fixed on two little crooked legs, which gained him the nickname of "corkscrew" from some fairy of the opera ballet.

Dupontel, who had taken the trouble to be born, but not like the grand seigneurs whom Beaumarchais made fun of once upon a time, was ballasted with a respectable number of millions, as is becoming in the sole heir of a house that had sold household utensils and appliances for over a century.

Naturally, like every other *nouveau riche* who respects himself, he wished to appear something, to play at being a clubman, and also to play to the gallery, because he had been educated at Vaugirard and knew a little English; because he had gone through his service in the army for twelve months at Rouen; because he was a tolerable singer, could drive four-in-hand, and play lawn tennis.

Always studiedly well-dressed, too correct in every way, copying his way of speaking, his hats and his trousers from the three or four snobs who set the fashion, reproducing other people's witticisms, learning anecdotes and jokes by heart, like a lesson, to use them again at small parties, and constantly laughing, without knowing why his friends burst into roars of merriment. Of course, he was a perfect fool, but, after all, a capital fellow, to whom it was only right to extend a good deal of indulgence.

When he had had a great many love affairs and had made the discovery that in love money does not create happiness two thirds of the time, that they had all deceived him and made him perfectly ridiculous at the end of the week, Charles Dupontel made up his mind to settle down as a respectable married man, and to marry not from calculation or from reason, but for love.

One autumn afternoon at Auteuil he noticed in front of the club stand, among the number of pretty women who were standing round the braziers, a girl with such a lovely delicate complexion that it looked like apple blossoms; her hair was like threads of gold, and she was so slight and supple that she reminded him of those outlines of saints which one sees in old stained glass in church windows. There

was also something enigmatical about her, for she had at the same time the delightfully ingenuous look of a schoolgirl during the holidays, and also of some enlightened young lady who already knows the how and the why of everything, who is exuberant with youth and life, and who is eagerly waiting for the moment when marriage will at length allow her to say and to do everything that comes into her head, and to amuse herself to satiety.

Then she had such tiny feet that they could have been held in a woman's hand, a waist that could have been clasped by a bracelet, curling eyelashes which fluttered like the wings of a butterfly, an impudent and sensual nose, and a vague, mocking smile that puckered her lips, like the petals of a rose.

Her father was a member of the Jockey Club, who was generally cleaned out, as they call it, at the Grand Prix, but who yet held his own bravely and went right on, and who kept himself afloat by prodigies of coolness and skill. He belonged to a race which could prove that his ancestors had been at the court of Charlemagne, and not musicians or cooks, as some people declared.

Her youth and beauty, and her father's pedigree, dazzled Dupontel, upset his brain, and altogether turned his mind upside down, and, combined, they seemed to him to be a mirage of happiness.

He obtained an introduction to her father, at the end of a game of baccarat, invited him to shoot with him, and a month later, as if it were an affair to be hurried over, he asked for, and obtained, the hand of Mademoiselle Thérèse de Montsaigne, and felt as happy as a miner who has discovered a vein of precious metal.

The young woman did not require more than twenty-four hours to discover that her husband was nothing but a ridiculous puppet, and immediately set about to consider how she might best escape from her cage and befool the poor fellow, who loved her with all his heart.

And she deceived him without the least pity or the slightest scruple; she did it as if from instinctive hatred, as if it were a necessity for her not only to make him ridiculous, but also to forget that she was bound in honor to him.

She was cruel, as all women are when they do not love, delighted in doing audacious and absurd things, and in visiting everything, and in braving danger. She seemed like a young colt that is intoxicated with the sun, the air, and its liberty, and gallops wildly across the meadows, jumps hedges and ditches, kicks, and whinnies joyously, and rolls about in the long, sweet grass.

But Dupontel remained quite undisturbed; he had not the slightest suspicion, and was the first to laugh when anybody told him some good story of a husband who had been deceived, although his wife repelled him, quarreled with him, and constantly pretended to be out of sorts or tired out, in order to escape from him. She seemed to take a malicious pleasure in annoying him by her personal remarks, her disenchanting answers, and her apparent listlessness.

They saw a great deal of company, and he called himself Du Pontel now, and even had thoughts of buying a Papal title; he only read certain newspapers, kept up a regular correspondence with the Orléans princes, was thinking of starting a racing stable, and finished up by believing that he really

was a fashionable man, and strutted about, and was puffed out with conceit, as he had probably never read La Fontaine's fable in which he tells the story of the ass that is laden with relics which people salute, and so takes their bows to himself.

Suddenly, however, anonymous letters disturbed his quietude and tore the veil unexpectedly from his eyes.

At first he would tear them up without reading them and shrug his shoulders disdainfully; but he received so many of them, and the writer seemed so determined to dot his *i's* and cross his *t's* and to make things clear to him, that the unhappy man began to grow disturbed, and to watch and look about him. He instituted minute inquiries, and arrived at the conclusion that he no longer had the right to make fun of other husbands, and that he was the perfect counterpart of Sganarelle.

Furious at having been duped, he set a whole private detective agency at work, continually acted a part, and one evening appeared unexpectedly with a commissary of police in the snug little bachelor's quarters which concealed his wife's escapades.

Thérèse, who was terribly frightened and at her wits' end at being thus surprised, and pale with shame and terror, hid herself behind the curtains, while her lover, an officer of dragoons, was very much vexed at being mixed up in such a pinchbeck scandal, and at being caught by these men who were so correctly dressed in frock coats. He frowned angrily, and had to restrain himself so as not to fling his partner in guilt out of window.

The police commissary, who was calmly looking at this little scene with the coolness of a connoisseur prepared to verify the fact that they were caught

in flagrante delictu, in an ironical voice said to the husband who had claimed his services:

"I must ask for your name in full, Monsieur?"

"Charles Joseph Edward Dupontel," was the answer. And as the commissary was writing it down from his dictation he added suddenly: "Du Pontel in two words, if you please, Monsieur le Commissionaire!"

THE VENUS OF BRANIZA

IN Braniza, some years ago, lived a noted Talmud student who was no less renowned for his beautiful wife than for his learning, wisdom, and fear of God. The Venus of Braniza deserved her name both on account of her remarkable beauty and also as the wife of a man who was deeply versed in the Talmud; for the wives of the Jewish philosophers are, as a rule, ugly, or even possess some bodily defect.

The Talmud explains this in the following manner. It is well known that marriages are made in heaven, and at the birth of a boy a divine voice calls out the name of his future wife, and *vice versa.* But just as a good father tries to get rid of his good wares to outsiders, and only uses the damaged stuff at home for his children, so God bestows those women whom other men would not care to have on the Talmudists.

Well, God made an exception in the case of our Talmudist, and had bestowed a Venus on him, perhaps only in order to confirm the rule by means of this exception, and to make it appear less hard. His wife was a woman who would have done honor to any king's throne, or to a pedestal in any sculpture gallery. Tall, and with a wonderful voluptuous figure, she carried a strikingly beautiful head, surmounted by thick, black plaits, on her proud shoulders, while two large, dark eyes languished and glowed beneath her long lashes, and her beautiful hands looked as if they were carved out of ivory.

This beautiful woman, who seemed to have been designed by nature to rule, to see slaves at her feet, to provide occupation for the painter's brush, the sculptor's chisel, and the poet's pen, lived the life of a rare and beautiful flower shut up in a hothouse, for she sat the whole day long wrapped up in her costly fur jacket and looked down dreamily into the street.

She had no children; her husband, the philosopher, studied and prayed and studied again from early morning until late at night; his mistress was the Veiled Beauty, as the Talmudists call the Kabbalah. She paid no attention to her house, for she was rich and everything went of its own accord like clockwork; nobody came to see her, and she never went out of the house; she sat and dreamed and brooded and—yawned.

One day when a terrible storm of thunder and lightning had spent its fury over the town and all windows had been opened in order to let the Messiah in, the Jewish Venus was sitting, as usual, in her comfortable easy-chair, shivering in spite of her fur jacket, and was thinking, when suddenly she

fixed her glowing eyes on the man who was sitting before the Talmud, swaying his body backward and forward, and said suddenly:

"Just tell me, when will Messias, the Son of David, come?"

"He will come," the philosopher replied, "when all the Jews have become either altogether virtuous or altogether vicious, says the Talmud."

"Do you believe that all the Jews will ever become virtuous?" the Venus continued.

"How can I believe that?"

"Then Messias will come when all the Jews have become vicious?"

The philosopher shrugged his shoulders and lost himself again in the labyrinth of the Talmud, out of which, so it is said, only one man ever returned in his sound mind, and the beautiful woman at the window again looked dreamily out on the heavy rain, while her white fingers played unconsciously with the dark fur of her magnificent jacket.

One day the Jewish philosopher had gone to a neighboring town where an important question of ritual was to be decided. Thanks to his learning, the question was settled sooner than he had expected, and instead of returning the next morning, as he had intended, he came back the same evening with a friend who was no less learned than himself. He got out of the carriage at his friend's house and went home on foot, and was not a little surprised when he saw his windows brilliantly illuminated, and found an officer's servant comfortably smoking his pipe in front of his house.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, in a friendly manner but with some curiosity, nevertheless.

"I am watching, in case the husband of the beautiful Jewess should come home unexpectedly."

"Indeed? Well, mind and keep a good look-out."

Saying this, the philosopher pretended to go away, but went into the house through the garden entrance at the back. When he got into the first room he found a table laid for two which had evidently only been left a short time previously. His wife was sitting as usual at her bedroom window wrapped in her fur jacket, but her cheeks were suspiciously red, and her dark eyes had not their usual languishing look, but now rested on her husband with a gaze which expressed at the same time satisfaction and mockery. At that moment he kicked against an object on the floor which gave forth a strange sound. He picked it up and examined it in the light. It was a pair of spurs.

"Who has been here with you?" the Talmudist said.

The Jewish Venus shrugged her shoulders contemptuously, but did not reply.

"Shall I tell you? The captain of hussars has been with you."

"And why should he not have been here with me?" she said, smoothing the fur on her jacket with her white hand.

"Woman! are you out of your mind?"

"I am in full possession of my senses," she replied, and a knowing smile hovered round her red, voluptuous lips. "But must I not also do my part in order that Messias may come and redeem us poor Jews?"

THE CARTER'S INN

THE coachman had jumped from his box and was walking slowly by the side of his thin horses, waking them up every moment by a cut of the whip or a coarse oath. He pointed to the top of the hill, where the windows of a solitary house were shining like yellow lamps, although it was quite late, and said to me:

"One gets a good drop there, Monsieur, and well served, by George!"

And his eyes flashed in his thin, sunburned face, which was of a deep brickdust color, while he smacked his lips like a drunkard who remembers a bottle of good liquor that he has lately drunk, and straightened himself up at the recollection.

"Yes, and well served by a wench who will turn your head for you before you have tilted your elbow and drunk a glass!"

The moon was rising behind the mountain peaks covered with snow which looked almost like blood under its rays, and were crowned by dark brown clouds, which whirled and floated about, reminding the passenger of some terrible Medusa's head. The gloomy plains of Capsir, which were traversed by torrents, with extensive meadows in which undefined forms were moving about, fields of rye like huge golden tablecovers, and here and there wretched villages and broad sheets of water, into which the stars seemed to look in a melancholy manner, opened out to the view. Damp gusts of wind swept along the road, bringing a strong smell of hay, of resin, of unknown flowers; and erratic pieces of rock were scattered on the surface like huge spectral boundary stones.

The driver pulled his broad-brimmed felt hat over his eyes, twirled his large mustache, and said in an obsequious voice:

"Does Monsieur wish to stop here? This is the place!"

It was a wretched wayside inn, with a reddish slate roof that looked as if it were suffering from leprosy, and before the door there stood three wagons drawn by mules and loaded with huge logs which took up nearly the whole of the road. The animals, who were in the habit of halting there, were dozing, and their heavy loads exhaled the odor of a pillaged forest.

Inside the house three wagoners were sitting in front of the fire, which crackled loudly; one of them, an old man, while the other two were young. Bottles and glasses stood on a large round table beside them, and they were singing and laughing boisterously. A woman with large round hips, and with

a lace cap pinned to her hair, in the Catalan fashion, who looked strong and bold and had a certain amount of gracefulness about her, with a pretty but untidy head, was urging them to undo the strings of their great leather purses, and replied to their somewhat indelicate jokes in a shrill voice, as she sat on the knee of the youngest and allowed him to kiss her without any signs of shame.

The coachman pushed open the door, like a man who knows that he is at home.

"Good evening, Glaizette, and everybody; there is room for two more, I suppose?"

The wagoners did not speak, but looked at us cunningly and angrily, like dogs whose food had been taken from them and who show their teeth, ready to bite, while the woman shrugged her shoulders and looked into their eyes like some female wild beast tamer. Then she asked us, with a strange smile:

"What am I to bring you?"

"Two glasses of cognac, and the best you have in the cupboard, Glaizette," the coachman replied, rolling a cigarette.

While she was uncorking the bottle I noticed how green her eyes were—it was a fascinating, tempting green, like that of the great green grasshopper—and also how small her hands were, which showed that she did not use them much; how white her teeth were, and how her voice, which was rather rough, though cooing, had a cruel, and at the same time a coaxing, sound. She was the typical hostess of a wayside inn of that description, not overscrupulous and with a store of secrets.

I was anxious to escape from her as soon as possible; no longer to see her pale green eyes, and

her mouth that bestowed caresses from pure charity, no longer to feel the woman with her beautiful, white hands so near me, so I threw her a piece of gold, and made my escape without saying a word to her, without waiting for any change, and without even wishing her good night, for I felt the caress of her smile and the disdainfulness of her looks. . .

The carriage started off at a gallop to Formiguères, amid a furious jingling of bells. I could not sleep any more; I wanted to know where that woman came from, but I was ashamed to ask the driver and to show any interest in such a creature, and when he began to talk, as we were going up another hill, as if he had guessed my thoughts, he told me all he knew about Glaizette. I listened to him with the attention of a child to whom somebody is telling some wonderful fairy tale.

She came from Fontpédrouze, a muleteers' village, where the men spend their time in drinking and gambling at the inn, when they are not traveling on the high roads with their mules, while the women do all the field work, carry the heaviest loads on their back, and lead a life of toil and misery.

Her father kept an inn, the girl grew up very happy; she was courted before she was fifteen, and was so coquettish that she was certain to be almost always found in front of her looking-glass, smiling at her own beauty, arranging her hair, trying to make herself like a young lady on the *prado*. And now as none of the family knew how to save a penny but spent more than they earned, and were like cracked jugs, from which the water escapes drop by drop, they found themselves ruined one fine day. So on the "Feast of Our Lady of Succor," when people go on a pilgrimage to Font Romea, and the

villages are consequently deserted, the innkeeper set fire to the house. The crime was discovered through Glaizette, who could not make up her mind to leave behind her the looking-glass with which her room was adorned, and so had carried it off under her petticoat.

The parents were sentenced to many years' imprisonment, and being set free to live as best she could, the girl became a servant, going from one place to another, inherited some property from an old farmer, whom she had caught, as if he were a thrush on a limed twig, and with the money she had built this inn on the new road which was being built across the Capsir.

"A regular bad one, Monsieur," the coachman said, in conclusion, "a vixen such as one does not see now in the worst garrison towns, and who would open the door to the whole confraternity, and not at all avaricious, but thoroughly honest."

I interrupted him in spite of myself, as if his words had pained me, while I thought of those pale green eyes, those magic eyes, eyes to be dreamed about, the color of grasshoppers, and I looked for them, and saw them in the darkness; they danced before me like phosphorescent lights, and I would have given the whole contents of my purse to that man, if he would only have been silent and urged his horses on to full speed, so that their mad gallop might carry me off quickly, quickly and far, and continually farther from that girl.

AN ADVENTURE

COME! Come!" said Pierre Dufaille, shrugging his shoulders. "What do you mean by saying that there are no more adventures? Say that there are no more adventurous men, and you will be right! Yes, nobody ventures to trust to chance in these days, for as soon as there is any slight mystery, or a spice of danger, they draw back. If, however, a man is willing to go into an adventure and to run the risk of anything that may happen, he can still meet with adventures, and even I, who never look for them, met with one in my life, and a very startling one; let me tell you about it.

"I was staying in Florence, and was living very quietly, and all I indulged in, in the way of adventures, was to listen occasionally to the immoral proposals with which every stranger is beset at night on the Piazza de la Signoria by some worthy Pandarus or other, with a head like that of a venerable priest. These excellent fellows generally introduce

you to their families, where debauchery is carried on in a very simple and almost patriarchal fashion, and where one does not run the slightest risk.

" One day as I was admiring Benvenuto Cellini's wonderful Perseus, in front of the Loggia dei Lanzi, I suddenly felt my sleeve pulled somewhat roughly, and on turning round I found myself face to face with a woman of about fifty, who said to me with a strong German accent: ' You are French, Monsieur, are you not? ' ' Certainly, I am,' I replied. ' And would you like to go home with a very pretty woman? '

" ' Most certainly I should,' I replied, with a laugh.

" Nothing could have been funnier than the looks and the serious air of the procuress, or than the strangeness of the proposal, made in broad daylight, and in very bad French, but it was even worse when she added: ' Do you know everything they do in Paris? '

" ' What do you mean, my good woman? ' I asked her, rather startled. ' What is done in Paris that is not done everywhere else? '

" However, when she explained her meaning, I replied that I certainly could not, and as I was not quite so immodest as the lady, I blushed a little. But not for long, for almost immediately afterward I grew pale when she said:

" ' I want to assure myself of it personally.' She said this in the same phlegmatic manner, which did not seem so funny to me now, but, on the contrary, rather frightened me.

" ' What! ' I said. ' Personally! You! Explain yourself! '

" If I had been rather surprised before, I was al-

together astonished at her explanation. It was indeed an adventure, and was almost like a romance. I could scarcely believe my ears, but this is what she told me:

" She was the confidential attendant on a lady moving in high society, who wished to be initiated into the most secret refinements of Parisian high life, and who had done me the honor of choosing me for her companion. But then this preliminary test! ' By Jove! ' I said to myself, ' this old German hag is not so stupid as she looks! ' And I laughed in my sleeve as I listened to what she was saying to persuade me.

" ' My mistress is the prettiest woman you can dream of; a real beauty; springtime! A flower! '

" ' You must excuse me, but if your mistress is really like springtime and a flower, you (pray excuse me for being so blunt) are not exactly that, and perhaps I should not exactly be in a mood to humor you, my dear lady, in the same way that I might her.'

" She jumped back, astonished in turn: ' Why, I only want to satisfy myself with my own eyes; not by injuring you.' And she finished her explanation, which had been incomplete before. All she had to do was to go with me to Mother Patata's well-known establishment, and there to be present while I conversed with one of its fair and frail inhabitants.

" ' Oh! ' I said to myself; ' I was mistaken in her tastes. She is, of course, an old, shriveled-up woman, as I guessed, but she is a specialist. This is interesting, upon my word! I never met with such a one before! '

" Here, gentlemen, I must beg you to allow me to

hide my face for a moment. What I said was evidently not strictly correct, and I am rather ashamed of it; my excuse must be that I was young, that Patata's was a celebrated place, of which I had heard wonderful things said, but the entry to which was barred me on account of my small means. Five napoleons was the price! Fancy! I could not treat myself to it, and so I accepted the good lady's offer. I do not say that it was not disagreeable, but what was I to do? And then, the old woman was a German, and so her five napoleons were a slight return for our five milliards, which we paid them as our war indemnity.

"Well, Patata's boarder was charming, the old woman was not too troublesome, and your humble servant did his best to sustain the ancient glory of Frenchmen.

"Let me drink my disgrace to the dregs! On the next day but one after I was waiting at the statue of Perseus. It was shameful, I confess, but I enjoyed the partial restitution of the five milliards, and it is surprising how a Frenchman loses his dignity when he is traveling.

"The good lady made her appearance at the appointed time. It was quite dark and I followed her without a word, for, after all, I was not very proud of the part I was playing. But if you only knew how fair that little girl at Patata's was! As I went along I thought only of her, and did not pay any attention to where we were going, and I was only roused from my reverie by hearing the old woman say: 'Here we are. Try to be as entertaining as you were the day before yesterday.'

"We were not outside Patata's house, but in a narrow street running by the side of a palace with

high walls, and in front of us was a small door, which the old woman opened gently.

"For a moment I felt inclined to draw back. Apparently the old hag was also ardent on her own account! She had me in a trap! No doubt she wanted in her turn to make use of my small talents! But, no! That was impossible!

"'Go in! Go in!' she said. 'What are you afraid of? My mistress is so pretty, so pretty, much prettier than the little girl of the other day.'

"So it was really true, this story out of *The Arabian Nights?* Why not? And, after all, what was I risking? The good woman would certainly not injure me, and so I went in, though somewhat nervously.

"Oh! My friend, what an hour I spent then! Paradise! and it would be useless, impossible to describe it to you. Apartments fit for a princess, and one of those princesses out of fairy-tales, a fairy herself. An exquisite German woman, exquisite as German women can be when they try. An Undine of Heinrich Heine's, with hair like the Virgin Mary's, innocent blue eyes, and a skin like strawberries and cream.

"Suddenly, however, my Undine got up, and her face was convulsed with fury and pride. Then she rushed behind some hangings, where she began to give vent to a flood of German words, which I did not understand, while I remained standing, dumfounded. But just then the old woman came in, and said, shaking with fear: 'Quick, quick; dress yourself and go, if you do not wish to be killed!'

"I asked no question, for what was the use of trying to understand? Besides, the old woman, who grew more and more terrified, could not find any

French words, and chattered wildly. I jumped up and got into my shoes and overcoat, and ran down the stairs and in the street.

" Ten minutes later I recovered my breath and my senses, without knowing what streets I had been through, nor where I had come from, and I stole furtively into my hotel, as if I had been a malefactor.

" In the cafés the next morning nothing was talked of except a crime that had been committed during the night. A German baron had killed his wife with a revolver, but he had been liberated on bail, as he had appealed to his counsel, to whom he had given the following explanation, to the truth of which the lady companion of the Baroness had certified:

" She had been married to her husband almost by force, and detested him, and she had some particular reasons (which were not specified) for her hatred of him. In order to have her revenge on him she had had him seized, bound and gagged by four hired ruffians, who had been caught, and who had confessed everything. Thus reduced to immobility and unable to help himself, the Baron had been obliged to witness a degrading scene, where his wife caressed a Frenchman, thus outraging conjugal fidelity and German honor at the same time. As soon as he was set at liberty the Baron had punished his faithless wife, and was now seeking her accomplice."

" And what did you do? " some one asked Pierre Dufaille.

" The only thing I could do, by George! " he replied. " I put myself at the poor devil's disposal; it was his right, and so we fought a duel.

Alas! It was with swords, and he ran me right through the body. That was also his right, but he exceeded his right when he called me her *ponce*. Then I gave him his change, and as I fell I called out with all the strength that remained to me: 'A Frenchman! A Frenchman! Long live France!'"

THE MAN WITH THE BLUE EYES

MONSIEUR PIERRE AGÉNOR DE VARGNES, the examining magistrate, the personification of dignity, sedateness, and correctness, was anything but a practical joker. Even in his wildest dreams he could never have perpetrated anything resembling a practical joke. It will thus be readily understood that a cold shiver passed through me when Monsieur Pierre Agénor de Vargnes did me the honor of sending a lady to call on me.

About eight o'clock one morning last winter, as he was leaving the house to go to the Palais de Justice, his footman handed him a card, on which was printed:

DOCTOR JAMES FERDINAND

Member of the Academy of Medicine
Port-au-Prince
Chevalier of the Legion of Honor

At the bottom of the card was written in pencil: "From Lady Frogère."

Monsieur de Vargnes knew the lady very well.

She was a very agreeable Creole from Hayti, whom he had met in many drawing-rooms; but, on the other hand, though the doctor's name did not awaken any recollections in him, his quality and titles alone required that he should grant him an interview, however short it might be. Therefore, although he was in a hurry to go out, Monsieur de Vargnes told the footman to show in his early visitor, but to tell him beforehand that his master was much pressed for time, as he had to go to the law courts.

When the doctor came in, in spite of his usual imperturbability, Monsieur de Vargnes could not restrain a movement of surprise, for the doctor presented that strange anomaly of being a negro of the purest, blackest type, with the eyes of a white man, of a man of the North, with pale, cold, clear, blue eyes; and his surprise increased when, after a few words of excuse for his untimely visit, he added, with an enigmatical smile:

"My eyes surprise you, do they not? I was sure that they would, and, to tell you the truth, I came here in order that you might look at them well, and never forget them."

His smile, and his words even more than his smile, seemed to be those of a madman. He spoke very softly, with that childish, lisping tone which is peculiar to negroes, and his mysterious, almost menacing words, therefore, sounded all the more as if they were uttered at random by an insane man. But his looks, the looks of those pale, cold, clear, blue eyes, were certainly not those of a madman. They clearly expressed menace, yes, menace, as well as irony, and, above all, implacable ferocity, and their glance was like a gleam of lightning which one could never forget.

"I have seen," Monsieur de Vargnes used to say when speaking about it, "the looks of many murderers, but in none of them have I ever observed such a depth of crime and of impudent security in crime."

And this impression was so strong that Monsieur de Vargnes thought that he was the victim of some hallucination, especially as when he spoke about his eyes, the doctor continued with a smile, and in his most childish accents: "Of course, Monsieur, you cannot understand what I am saying to you, and I must beg your pardon. To-morrow you will receive a letter which will explain it all to you, but, first of all, it was necessary that I should let you have a good, careful look at my eyes, my eyes, which are myself, my only and true self, as you will see."

With these words and with a polite bow, the doctor went out, leaving Monsieur de Vargnes extremely surprised, and a prey to doubt, as he said to himself:

"Is he merely a madman? His fierce expression and the criminal depth of his looks are perhaps caused merely by the extraordinary contrast between his fierce looks and his pale eyes."

And, absorbed in these thoughts, Monsieur de Vargnes unfortunately allowed several minutes to elapse, and then he thought to himself suddenly:

"No, I am not the sport of any hallucination, and this is no case of optical delusion. This man is evidently some terrible criminal, and I have altogether failed in my duty in not arresting him myself at once, though illegally, even at the risk of my life."

The judge ran downstairs in pursuit of the doctor, but it was too late; he had disappeared. In

the afternoon he called on Madame Frogère to ask her whether she could tell him anything about the matter. She, however, had no acquaintance with the negro doctor, and was even able to assure the judge that he bore a fictitious title; for, as she was well acquainted with the upper classes in Hayti, she knew that the Academy of Medicine at Port-au-Prince had no doctor of that name among its members. As Monsieur de Vargnes persisted and gave a description of the doctor, especially mentioning his extraordinary eyes, Madame Frogère began to laugh, and said:

"You have certainly had to do with a practical joker, my dear Monsieur. The eyes which you have described are certainly those of a white man, and the individual must have been painted black."

On thinking it over Monsieur de Vargnes remembered that the doctor had nothing of the negro about him but his black skin, his woolly hair and beard, and his way of speaking, which could easily be affected, but nothing of the negro, not even the characteristic, undulating walk. Perhaps, after all, he was only a practical joker, and during the whole day Monsieur de Vargnes took refuge in that view, which rather wounded his dignity as a man of importance, but appeased his scruples as a magistrate.

The next day he received the promised letter, which was composed, as well as addressed, in type cut out of the newspapers. It was as follows:

"MONSIEUR: Doctor James Ferdinand does not exist, but the man whose eyes you saw does, and you will certainly recognize his eyes. This man has committed two crimes, for which he does not feel any remorse, but, as he is a psychologist, he is afraid of some day yielding to the irresistible

temptation of confessing his crimes. You know better than any one (and that is your most powerful aid) with what imperious force criminals, especially intellectual ones, feel this temptation. That great poet, Edgar Poe, has written masterpieces on this subject, which express the truth exactly, but he has omitted to mention the last phenomenon, which I will tell you. Yes, I, a criminal, feel a terrible wish for somebody to know of my crimes, and when this desire is satisfied, and my secret has been revealed to a confidant, I shall be tranquil for the future, and be freed from this demon of perversity, which only tempts us once. Well! Now that is accomplished. You shall have my secret. From the day that you recognize me by my eyes, you will try and find out what I am guilty of, and how I was guilty, and you will discover it, being a master of your profession, which, by the by, has procured you the honor of having been chosen by me to bear the weight of this secret, which now is shared by us, and by us two alone. I say, advisedly, *by us two alone.* You could not, as a matter of fact, prove the reality of this secret to any one, unless I were to confess it, and I defy you to obtain my public confession, as I have confessed it to you, *and without danger to myself.*"

Three months later Monsieur de Vargnes met Monsieur X—— at an evening party, and at first sight, and without the slightest hesitation, he recognized in him those very pale, very cold, and very clear blue eyes, eyes which it was impossible to forget.

The man himself remained perfectly impassive, so that Monsieur de Vargnes was forced to say to himself:

"Probably I am the sport of a hallucination at this moment, or else there are two pairs of eyes in the world that are perfectly similar. And what eyes! Can it be possible?"

The magistrate instituted inquiries into the man's life, and he discovered something that removed all his doubts.

Five years previously Monsieur X—— had been a very poor but very brilliant medical student, who, although he never took his doctor's degree, had already made himself remarkable by his bacteriological researches.

A young and very rich widow had fallen in love with him and married him. She had one child by her first marriage, and in the space of six months, first the child and then the mother died of typhoid fever, and thus Monsieur X—— had inherited a large fortune, in due form, and without any possible dispute. Everybody said that he had attended to the two patients with the utmost devotion. Now, were these two deaths the two crimes mentioned in his letter?

But then Monsieur X—— must have poisoned his two victims with the microbes of typhoid fever, which he had skillfully cultivated so as to make the disease incurable, even with the most devoted care and attention. Why not?

"Do you believe it?" I asked Monsieur de Vargnes.

"Absolutely," he replied. "And the most terrible thing about it is that the villain is right when he defies me to force him to confess his crime publicly, for I see no means of obtaining a confession, none whatever. For a moment I thought of magnetism, but who could magnetize that man with those pale, cold, bright eyes? With such eyes he would force the magnetist to denounce himself as the culprit."

Then he said, with a deep sigh:

"Ah! Formerly there was something good about justice!"

And when he saw my inquiring looks he added:

"Formerly, justice had torture at its command."

"Upon my word," I replied, with all an author's unconscious and simple egotism, "it is quite certain that without the torture this strange tale will have no conclusion, and that is very unfortunate, as far as regards the story I intended to make out of it."

THE ODALISQUE OF SENICHOU

ABOUT twenty years ago, in Senichou, a suburb of Prague, lived a poor, honest couple who earned their bread by the sweat of their brows, the husband working in a large printing establishment, while his wife employed her spare time as a laundress. Their pride, and their only delight, was their daughter, Viteska, a vigorous, voluptuous-looking, handsome girl of eighteen, whom they brought up well and carefully. She worked for a dressmaker, and was thus able to help her parents a little, and she made use of her leisure moments in improving her education, and especially her music. She was a general favorite in the neighborhood, and was looked upon as a model by the whole suburb.

When she went to town to her work the tall girl, with her magnificent head like that of an ancient Bohemian Amazon, with its wealth of black hair,

and her dark, sparkling yet soft eyes, attracted the looks of passers-by, in spite of her shabby dress, more than did the graceful, well-dressed ladies of the aristocracy. Frequently some young, wealthy idler would follow her home, and even try to get into conversation with her, but she always managed to get rid of them and their importunities, and did not require any escort, for she was quite capable of protecting herself from any insults.

One evening, however, on the suspension bridge, she met a man whose strange appearance made her glance at him with some interest, but perhaps with even more surprise. He was tall and handsome, with bright eyes and a black beard; he was very sunburned, and in his long coat, resembling a caftan, with a red fez on his head, he gave one the impression of an Oriental. He had noticed her glance all the more as he himself had been so struck by her poor, and at the same time regal, appearance that he remained standing and looking at her as if he were devouring her with his eyes, so that Viteska, who was usually so fearless, cast down her eyes. She hurried on and he followed her, and the quicker she walked the more rapidly he followed, and at last, when they were in a narrow, dark street in the suburb, he suddenly said, in an

insinuating voice: "May I offer you my arm, my pretty girl?"

"You can see that I am old enough to look after myself," Viteska replied hastily; "I am much obliged to you, and must beg you not to follow me any more; I am known in this neighborhood, and it might injure my reputation." "Oh, you are very much mistaken if you think you will get rid of me so easily," he replied. "I have just come from the East and am returning there soon. Come with me, and as I believe that you are as sensible as you are beautiful you will certainly make your fortune there, and I will warrant that before the end of a year you will be covered with diamonds, and be waited on by eunuchs and female slaves."

"I am a respectable girl, sir," she replied proudly, and tried to go ahead of him, but the stranger was immediately at her side again. "You were born to rule," he whispered to her. "Believe me, and I understand the matter, that you will live to be a sultana, if you have any luck."

The girl did not give him any answer, but walked on.

"But, at any rate, listen to me," the tempter continued.

"I will not listen to anything. Because I am poor you think it will be easy for you to tempt me," Viteska exclaimed; "but I am as virtuous as I am poor, and I should despise any position which I had to buy with my shame." They had reached the little house where her parents lived, and she ran in quickly and slammed the door behind her.

When she went into town the next morning the stranger was waiting at the corner of the street

where she lived, and bowed to her very respectfully. "Allow me to speak a few words to you," he began. "I feel that I ought to beg your pardon for my behavior yesterday."

"Please let me go on my way quietly," the girl replied. "What will the neighbors think of me?"

"I did not know you," he went on, without paying any attention to her angry looks, "but your extraordinary beauty attracted me. Now that I know that you are as good as you are charming I wish very much to become better acquainted with you. Believe me, I have the most honorable intentions."

Unfortunately the bold stranger had taken the girl's fancy, and she could not find it in her heart to refuse him. "If you are really in earnest," she stammered, in charming confusion, "do not follow me about in the public streets, but come to my parents' house like a man of honor, and state your intentions there."

"I will certainly do so, and immediately, if you like," the stranger replied eagerly.

"No, no," Viteska said; "but come this evening, if you like."

The stranger bowed and left her, and really called on her parents the same evening. He introduced himself as Ireneus Krisapolis, a merchant of Smyrna, spoke of his brilliant circumstances, and finally declared that he loved Viteska passionately.

"That is all very well," the cautious father replied, "but what will it all lead to? Under no circumstances can I allow you to visit my daughter. Such a passion as yours often dies out as quickly as it rises, and a respectable girl is easily robbed of her virtue."

"And suppose I make up my mind to marry your daughter?" the stranger asked, after a moment's hesitation.

"Then I shall refer you to my child, for I shall never force Viteska to marry against her will," her father said.

The stranger seized the pretty girl's hand, and spoke in glowing terms of his love for her, of the luxury with which she would be surrounded in his house, of the wonders of the East, to which he hoped to take her, and at last Viteska consented to become his wife. Thereupon the stranger hurried on the arrangements for the wedding in a manner that made the most favorable impression on them all, and during the time before their marriage he lay at her feet like her humble slave.

As soon as they were married the newly married couple set off on their journey to Smyrna and promised to write as soon as they got there. But a month, then two and three, passed without the parents receiving a line from them, and as their anxiety increased every day the father, in terror, finally applied to the police.

The first thing was to write to the Consul at Smyrna for information. His reply was to the effect that no merchant of the name of Ireneus Krisapolis was known in Smyrna, and that he had never been there. The police, at the entreaties of the frantic parents, continued their investigations, but for a long time without any result. At last, however, they obtained a little light on the subject, but it was not at all satisfactory. The police at Pesth said that a man, whose personal appearance exactly agreed with the description of Viteska's husband, had a short time before carried off two

girls from the Hungarian capital to Turkey, evidently intending to trade in that coveted, valuable commodity there, but that when he found that the authorities were on his track he had escaped from justice by a sudden flight.

* * * * * * *

Four years after Viteska's mysterious disappearance, two persons, a man and a woman, met in a narrow street in Damascus just as the Greek merchant had met Viteska on the suspension bridge at Prague. The man with the black beard, the red fez, and the long green caftan was no other than Ireneus Krisapolis. Matters appeared to be going well with him. He had his hands comfortably thrust into the red shawl which he wore round his waist, and a negro was walking behind him with a large parasol, while another carried his *chibuque*. A noble Turkish lady in a litter borne by four slaves met him; her face was covered with a white veil, all except a pair of large dark eyes that flashed threateningly at the merchant.

He smiled, for he thought that he had found favor in the eyes of an Eastern houri, and that flattered him; but soon he lost sight of her in the crowd, and forgot her almost immediately. The next morning, however, a eunuch of the Pasha's called on him, to his no small astonishment, and told him to come with him. He took him to the Sultan's most powerful deputy, who ruled as an absolute despot in Damascus. They went through dark narrow passages, and curtains were pushed aside which rustled as they closed behind him. At last they reached a large rotunda in the center of which was a beautiful fountain, and scarlet divans were

placed all round it. Here the eunuch told the merchant to wait, and left him. He was puzzling his brains to know what the meaning of it all could be, when suddenly a tall, commanding woman came into the apartment. Again a pair of large, threatening eyes looked at him through the veil, and he knew from her green, gold-embroidered caftan that if it was not the Pasha's wife it was at least one of his favorites who was before him. He hurriedly knelt down, and, crossing his hands on his breast, put his forehead to the ground before her. But a clear, mocking laugh made him look up, and when the beautiful odalisque threw back her veil he uttered a cry of terror, for his wife, his deceived wife whom he had sold, was standing before him.

"Do you know me?" she asked, with quiet dignity.

"Viteska!"

"Yes, that was my name when I was your wife," she replied quickly, in a contemptuous voice; "but now that I am the Pasha's wife my name is Sarema. I do not suppose you ever expected to find me again, you wretch, when you sold me in Varna to an old Jewish profligate who was only half alive. You see I have got into better hands, and I have made my fortune, as you said I should do. Well? What do you expect of me; what thanks, what reward?"

The wretched man was lying, overwhelmed with confusion, at the feet of the woman whom he had so shamefully deceived, and could not find a word to say; he felt that he was lost, and had not even the courage to beg for mercy.

"You deserve death, you miscreant," Sarema continued. "You are in my hands and I can do

whatever I please with you, for the Pasha has left your punishment to me alone. I ought to have you impaled, and to feast my eyes on your death agonies. That would be the smallest compensation for all the years of degradation that I have been through, and which I owe to you."

The wretched man cried, trembling all over and raising his hands to her in supplication: "Mercy, Viteska! Mercy!"

The odalisque's only reply was a laugh in which rang all the cruelty of an insulted woman's deceived heart. It seemed to give her pleasure to see the man whom she had loved and who had so shamefully trafficked in her beauty, in his abasement as he cringed before her, whining for his life as he clung to her knees; but at last she seemed to relent somewhat.

"I will give you your life, you miserable wretch," she said, "but you shall not go unpunished." So saying, she clapped her hands, and four black eunuchs came in and seized the favorite's unfortunate husband, and in a moment bound his hands and feet.

"I have changed my mind and he shall not be put to death," Sarema said, with a smile that made the traitor's blood run cold in his veins; "but give him a hundred blows with the bastinado, and I will stand by and count them."

"For God's sake," the merchant screamed, "I can never endure it."

"We will see about that," the favorite said coldly, "and if you die under it it is allotted you by fate; I am not going to retract my orders."

She threw herself down on the cushions and began to smoke a long pipe which a female slave

handed to her on her knees. At a sign from her the eunuchs tied the wretched man's feet to the pole by which the soles of the culprit were raised, and began the terrible punishment. At the tenth blow the merchant began to roar like a wild animal, but his wife, whom he had betrayed, remained unmoved, carelessly blowing blue wreaths of smoke into the air, and, resting on her lovely arm, she watched his features, distorted by pain, with merciless enjoyment.

During the last blows he only groaned feebly, and then fainted.

* * * * * * *

A year later the dealer was caught with his female merchandise by the police in an Austrian town and handed over to justice, when he made a full confession, and by that means the parents of the Odalisque of Senichou heard of their daughter's position. As they knew that she was happy and surrounded by luxury, they made no attempt to get her out of the hands of the Pasha, who, like a thorough Mussulman, had become the slave of his slave.

The unfortunate husband was sent across the frontier when he was released from prison. His shameful traffic, however, flourishes still in spite of all the precautions of the police and of the consuls, and every year he provides the harems of the East with those voluptuous *Boxclanas,* especially from Bohemia and Hungary, who, in the eyes of a Mussulman, vie for the prize of beauty with the slender Circassian women.

THE ACCENT

IT was a large house from whose white terraces overshadowed by vines one had a view of the sea. Tall pines formed a dome over the portico. There was a look of neglect and loneliness about the place, such as impresses one after a death or the departure of friends for other lands.

The interior wore a strange look, with unpacked boxes serving for wardrobes, and piles of bandboxes. There was an array of worm-eaten armchairs, into which bits of velvet and silk, cut from old dresses, had been twisted anyhow to make seats, and along the walls there were rows of rusty nails which made one think of old portraits and of pictures full of associations, which had one by one been bought for a low price by some second-hand furniture dealer.

The rooms were in disorder and furnished in a nondescript fashion, while velvets were hanging

from the ceilings and in the corners, and seemed to show that as the servants were no longer paid except by hopes, they no longer did more than give them an accidental, careless touch with the broom occasionally. The drawing-room, which was extremely large, was full of useless knickknacks, rubbish which is put up for sale at stalls at watering-places, daubs—they could not be called paintings—of portraits and of flowers, and an old piano with yellow keys.

Such was the home where she who had been called the handsome Madame de Maurillac was spending her monotonous existence, like some unfortunate doll which inconstant, childish hands have thrown into a corner in a loft, she who almost passed for a professional beauty, and whose coquetries, at least so the faithful ones of the party said, had been able to excite a fleeting and last spark of desire in the dull eyes of the Emperor.

Like so many others, she and her husband had waited for his return from Elba, had discounted a fresh, immediate chance, had kept up boldly, and spent the remains of his fortune at that game of luxury.

On the day when the illusion vanished and he was forced to awake from his dream, Monsieur de Maurillac, without considering that he was leaving his wife and daughter behind him almost penniless, but not being able to make up his mind to come down in the world, to vegetate, to fight his creditors, to accept the alms of some sinecure, poisoned himself, like a shopgirl who is forsaken by her contemptuous sweetheart.

Madame de Maurillac did not mourn for him, and as this lamentable disaster made her interest-

ing, and as she was assisted and supported by unexpected acts of kindness, and had a good adviser in one of those old Parisian lawyers who would get anybody out of the most inextricable difficulties, she managed to save something from the wreck, and to keep a small income. Then, reassured and emboldened, and resting her ultimate illusions and her chimerical hopes on her daughter's radiant beauty, and preparing for that last game in which they would risk everything, and, perhaps, also hoping that she might herself marry again, the ancient flirt arranged a double existence.

For months and months she disappeared from the world, and as a pretext for her isolation and for hiding herself in the country she alleged her daughter's delicate health, and also the important interests she had to look after in the South of France.

Her frivolous friends looked upon that as a great act of heroism, as something almost superhuman, and so courageous that incessant letters religiously kept her up in all the scandal and love adventures, in the falls as well as in the apotheoses of the capital.

The difficult struggle which Madame de Maurillac had to keep up in order to maintain her rank was really as fine as any of those campaigns in the twilight of glory, as those slow retreats where men only give way inch by inch and fight until the last cartridge is expended, until at last fresh troops arrive, reënforcements which bar the way to the enemy, and save the threatened flag.

Broken in by the same discipline and haunted by the same dream, mother and daughter lived on almost nothing in the dull, dilapidated house which

the peasants called the château, and economized like poor people who have only a few hundred francs a year to live on. But Fabienne de Maurillac developed well in spite of everything, and grew up into a woman like some rare flower which is reared in a hot-house and preserved from the rough outside air.

In order that she might not lose her Parisian accent by speaking too much with the servants, who had remained peasants under their livery, Madame de Maurillac, who had not been able to bring a lady's maid with her, on account of the extra cost which her traveling expenses and wages would have entailed, and who, moreover, was afraid that some indiscretion might betray her maneuvers and cover her with ridicule, made up her mind to wait on her daughter herself. And Fabienne talked with nobody but her, saw nobody but her, and was like a little novice in a convent. Nobody was allowed to speak to her, or to interrupt her walks in the large garden, or on the white terraces that were reflected in the blue water.

As soon as the season for the country and the seaside came, however, they packed up their trunks and locked the doors of their house of exile. As they were not known, and by taking those terrible trains which stop at every station, and by which travelers arrive at their destination in the middle of the night, with the certainty that nobody will be waiting for you and see you get out of the carriage, they traveled third class, so that they might have a few banknotes the more with which to make a show.

A fortnight in Paris in the family house at Auteuil, a fortnight in which to try on dresses and bonnets and to show themselves, and then Trouville, Aix or Biarritz, the whole show complete, with par-

ties succeeding parties; money was spent as if they did not know its value; balls at the casinos, constant flirtations, compromising intimacies, and the kind of admirers who immediately surround two pretty women, one in the radiant beauty of her eighteen years, and the other in the brightness of that maturity which beautiful September days bring with them.

Unfortunately, however, they had to do the same thing over again every year, and as if bad luck were continuing to follow them implacably, Madame de Maurillac and her daughter did not succeed in their endeavors, and did not manage during her usual absence from home to pick up some nice fellow who fell in love immediately, who took them seriously, and asked for Fabienne's hand; consequently, they were very unhappy. Their energies flagged, and their courage oozed away like water that escapes, drop by drop, through a crack in a jug. They grew low-spirited and no longer dared to be frank with each other and to exchange confidences and projects.

Fabienne, with her pale cheeks, her large eyes with blue circles round them, and her tight lips, looked like some captive princess who is tormented by constant ennui and troubled by evil suggestions, who dreams of flight and of escape from that prison where Fate holds her captive.

One night when the sky was covered with heavy thunderclouds and the heat was most oppressive, Madame de Maurillac called her daughter, whose room was next to hers. After calling her loudly for some time in vain, she sprang out of bed in terror and almost broke open the door with her trembling hands. The room was empty and the pillows untouched.

Almost distracted and foreseeing some irreparable misfortune, the poor woman ran all over the large house, and then rushed out into the garden, where the air was heavy with the scent of flowers. She had the appearance of some wild animal that is being pursued by a pack of hounds, tried to penetrate the darkness with her anxious looks, and gasped as if some one were holding her by the throat; but suddenly she staggered, uttered a painful cry, and fell down in a fit.

There, before her, in the shadow of the myrtle trees, Fabienne was sitting on the knees of a man—of the gardener—with both her arms round his neck and kissing him ardently, and as if to defy her mother and to show her how vain all her precautions and her vigilance had been, the girl was telling her lover, in the country dialect and in a cooing and delightful voice, how she adored him, and that she would be his. . . .

Madame de Maurillac is in a lunatic asylum, and Fabienne has married the gardener.

What could she have done better?

A USEFUL HOUSE

THROWING himself back in the great armchair, which he completely filled up, Royaumont, that picker-up of bits of pinchbeck, as they called him at the club, his fat sides shaking with laughter at the mere recollection of the funny story that he had promised to his friends, at last said:

"It is perfectly true Bordenave does not owe any one a penny and can go through any street he likes and publish those famous memoirs of sheriffs' officers which he has been writing for the last ten years, when he did not dare to go out, and in which he carefully brought out the characters and peculiarities of all those generous distributers of stamped paper with whom he had had dealings, their tricks and wiles, their weaknesses, their jokes, their manner of performing

their duties, sometimes with brutal rudeness and at others with cunning good nature, now embarrassed and almost ashamed of their work, and again ironically jovial, as well as the artifices of their clerks to get a few crumbs from their employers' cake. The book will soon be published, and Machin, the vaudeville writer, has promised him a preface, so that it will be a most amusing work. You are surprised, eh? Confess that you are absolutely surprised, and I will lay you any bet you like that you will not guess how our excellent friend, whose existence is an inexplicable problem, has been able to settle with his creditors, and suddenly produce the requisite amount."

"Do get to the facts, confound it!" said Captain Hardeur, who was growing tired of all this verbiage.

"All right, I will get to them as quickly as possible," Royaumont replied, throwing the stump of his cigar into the fire. "I will clear my throat and begin. I suppose you all of you know that two better friends than Bordenave and Quillanet do not exist; neither of them could do without the other, and they have ended by dressing alike, by having the same gestures, the same laugh, the same walk, and the same inflections of voice, so that one would think that some close bond united them, and that they had been brought up together from childhood. There is, however, this great difference between them, that Royaumont is completely ruined and that all that he possesses are bundles of mortgages, ridiculous parchments which attest his ancient race, and chimerical hopes of inheriting money some day, though these expectations are already heavily hypothecated. Consequently, he is always on the look-

out for some fresh expedients for raising money, though he is superbly indifferent about everything, while Sebastien Quillanet, of the banking house of Quillanet Brothers, must have an income of eight thousand francs a year, but is descended from an obscure laborer who managed to secure some of the national property, then he became an army contractor, speculated on defeat as well as victory, and Quillanet does not know now what to do with his money. But the millionaire is timid, dull, and always bored; the ruined spendthrift amuses him by his impertinent ways and his libertine jokes; he prompts him when he is at a loss for an answer, extricates him from his difficulties, serves as his guide in the great forests of Paris, which is strewn with so many pitfalls, and helps him to avoid those vulgar adventures which socially ruin a man, no matter how well ballasted he may be. Then Bordenave points out to him what women would make suitable companions for him, who make a man noted, and have the effect of some rare and beautiful flower in his buttonhole. He is the confidant of his intrigues, his guest when he gives small, special entertainments, his daily familiar table companion, and the buffoon whose sly humor one stimulates and whose worst witticisms one tolerates.''

'' Really, really,'' the Captain interrupted him, '' you have been going on for more than a quarter of an hour without saying anything.''

So Royaumont shrugged his shoulders and continued:

'' Oh! you can be very annoying when you please, my dear fellow! . . . Last year, when Bordenave was at daggers drawn with his people, who were deafening him with their recriminations,

were worrying him and threatening him with a lot of annoyance, Quillanet got married. A marriage of reason, which apparently changed his habits and his tastes, more especially as the banker was at that time associated with a perfect little marvel of a woman, a Parisian jewel of unspeakable attractions and of bewitching delicacy, that adorable Suzette Marly, who is just like a pocket Venus, and who in some prior stage of her existence must have been Phryne or Lesbia. Of course, he did not give up seeing her, but as he was bound to take some judicious precautions, which are necessary for a man who is deceiving his wife, he rented and furnished a house with a courtyard in front and a garden at the back, which one might think had been built to shelter some amorous folly. It was the nest that he had dreamed of, warm, snug, elegant, the walls covered with silk hangings of subdued tints, large pier-glasses, allegorical pictures, and filled with luxurious low furniture that seemed to invite flirtations. Bordenave occupied the ground floor, and the first floor served as a shrine for the banker and a luxurious abode for the beautiful Suzette. Well, just a week ago, in order to hide the situation better, Bordenave asked Quillanet and some other friends to one of those luncheons which he understands so well how to order, such a delicious luncheon, that before it was quite over every man and woman in this gay company were carrying on at a great rate, when the butler came in with an embarrassed look, and whispered something to him.

"'Tell the gentleman that he has made a mistake, and ask him to leave me in peace,' Bordenave replied to him in an angry voice. The servant went out and returned immediately to say that the in-

truder was using threats, that he refused to leave the house, and even spoke of having recourse to the commissary of police. Bordenave frowned, threw his table napkin down, upset two glasses, and staggered out with a red face, swearing and stammering out:

"'This is rather too much, and the fellow shall find out what going out of the window means, if he will not leave by the door.' But in the anteroom he found himself face to face with a very cool, polite, impassive gentleman, who said very quietly to him:

"'You are Comte Robert de Bordenave, I believe, Monsieur?'

"'Yes, Monsieur.'

"'And the lease that you signed at the lawyer's, Monsieur Albin Calvert, in the Rue du Faubourg-Poissonnière, is in your name, I believe?'

"'Certainly, Monsieur.'

"'Then I regret extremely to have to tell you that if you are not in a position to pay the various accounts which different people have intrusted to me for collection here, I shall be obliged to seize all the furniture, pictures, plate, clothes, etc., which are here, in the presence of two witnesses who are waiting for me downstairs in the street.'

"'I suppose this is some joke, Monsieur?'

"'It would be a very poor joke, Monsieur le Comte, and one which I should certainly not allow myself toward you!'

"The situation was absolutely critical and ridiculous, the more so that in the dining-room the women, who were slightly the worse for wine, were tapping the wine glasses with their spoons and calling for him. What could he do except to explain his mis-

adventure to Quillanet, who became sobered immediately, and rather than see his shrine violated, his secret disclosed, and his pictures, ornaments, and furniture sold, gave a check in due form for the claim there and then, though with a very wry face. And in spite of this, some people will deny that men who are utterly broke often have a stroke of luck!"

A RUPTURE

IT is just as I tell you, my dear fellow, those two poor things whom we all of us envied, who looked like a couple of pigeons when they were billing and cooing, and were always spooning until they made themselves ridiculous, now hate each other just as much as they used to adore each other. It is a complete break, and one of those which cannot be mended as you can mend an old plate! And all for a bit of nonsense, for something so funny that it ought to have brought them closer together and have made them laugh over it until they were ill. But how can a man explain himself when he is dying of jealousy, and when he keeps repeating to his terrified mistress: 'You are lying! you are lying!' When he shakes her, interrupts her while she is speaking, and says such hard things to her that at last she flies into a rage, has enough of it, becomes hard and mad, and thinks of nothing but of giving tit

for tat and of paying him back in his own coin; does not care a straw about destroying his happiness, sends everything to the devil, and talks a lot of bosh, which she certainly does not believe. And then, because there is nothing so stupid and so obstinate in the whole world as lovers, neither he nor she will take the first step and own to having been in the wrong, and regret having gone too far; but both wait and watch and do not even write a few lines about nothing, which would restore peace. No, they let day succeed day, and there are feverish and sleepless nights when the bed seems so hard, so cheerless and so large, and habits get weakened, and the fire of love that was still smoldering at the bottom of the heart evaporates in smoke. By degrees both find some reason for what they wished to do, they think themselves idiots to lose time which will never return, in that fashion, and so good-by, and there you are! That is how Josine Cadenette and that great idiot Servance separated."

Lalie Spring had lighted a cigarette, and the blue smoke played about her fine, fair hair, which made one think of those last rays of the setting sun which pierce through the clouds at sunset. Resting her elbows on her knees, and with her chin in her hand in a dreamy attitude, she murmured:

"Sad, isn't it?"

"Bah!" I replied, "at their age people easily console themselves, and everything begins over again, even love!"

"Well, Josine has already found somebody else . . ."

"And did she tell you her story?"

"Of course she did, and it is such a joke! You must know that Servance is one of those fellows

one would wish to have when one has time to amuse one's self, and so self-possessed that he would be capable of ruining all the seniors in a girls' school, and given to trifling as much as most men, so that Josine calls him 'perpetual motion.' He would have liked to go on with his fun until the day of judgment, and seemed to fancy that beds were not made to sleep in at all; but she could not get used to being deprived of nearly all her rest, and it really made her ill. But as she wished to be as conciliatory as possible, and to love and to be loved as ardently as in the past, and also to sleep off the effects of her happiness peacefully, she rented a small room in a distant quarter, in a quiet, shady street, giving out that she had just come from the country, and put hardly any furniture into it except a good bed and a dressing-table. Then she invented an old aunt for the occasion, who was ill and always grumbling, and who suffered from heart disease and lived in one of the suburbs; and so several times a week Josine took refuge in her sleeping place, and used to sleep late there, as if it had been some delicious abode where one forgets the whole world. Sometimes they forgot to call her at the proper time; she got back late, tired, with red and swollen eyelids, involved herself in lies, contradicted herself, and looked so much as if she had just come from the confessional, feeling horribly ashamed of herself, or as if she had hurried home from some assignation, that at last Servance worried himself about it, thought that he was being made a fool of, as so many of his comrades were, got into a rage, and made up his mind to set the matter straight, and to discover who this aunt of his mistress was who had so suddenly fallen from the skies.

" He was reduced to apply to an obliging agency, where they excited his jealousy, exasperated him day after day by making him believe that Josine Cadenette was making an absolute fool of him, had no more a sick aunt than she had any virtue, but that during the day she lived a fast life, and more than probably one of his own best friends was amusing himself at his expense.

" He was fool enough to believe these fellows, instead of going and watching Josine himself, putting his nose into the business, and going and knocking at the door of her room. He wanted to hear no more and would not listen to her. For a trifle, in spite of her tears, he would have turned the poor thing into the streets as if she had been a bundle of dirty linen. You may guess how she flew out at him and told him all sorts of things to annoy him; she let him believe he was not mistaken, that she had had enough of his affection, and that she was madly in love with another man. He grew very pale when she said that, looked at her furiously, clinched his teeth, and said in a hoarse voice:

" ' Tell me his name, tell me his name! '

" ' Oh! ' she said teasingly, ' you know him very well! ' and if I had not happened to have gone in I think there would have been a tragedy. . . . How stupid they are, and they were so happy and loved each other so! . . . And now Josie is living with fat Schweinssohn, a low scoundrel who will live upon her, and Servance has taken up with Sophie Labisque, who might easily be his mother; you know her, that bundle of red and yellow, who has been at that kind of thing for eighteen years, and whom Laglandée has christened *Sæcula sæculorum!* "

" By Jove! I should rather think I did! "

VIRTUE IN THE BALLET

WHEN the theatrical annalist discovers a true, honest heart behind the glamor of the stage he experiences a sensation of real pleasure. Of all the witches and semi-witches of that eternal Walpurgis night that represents the world, the ladies of the ballet have at all times and in all places been regarded as least like saints, although Hackländer repeatedly tried in his earlier novels to convince us that true virtue appears in tights and short petticoats, and is only to be found in ballet girls. Popular opinion does not bear out this theory, although here and there one finds a pearl in the dust and even in the dirt, as the following story will show:

Whenever a new, youthful dancer appeared at the Vienna Opera House the *habitués* began to go

after her, and did not rest until the fresh young rose had been plucked by some hand or other. For how could those young and pretty, sometimes even beautiful, girls, who, with every right to life, love, and pleasure, were poor and had to subsist on a very small salary, resist the seduction of the smell of flowers and of the flash of diamonds? And if one resisted it, it was love, some real, strong passion, that gave her the strength to do so. But if she was then deserted she became only the more selfish and shameless.

At the beginning of the winter season of 185— the news was spread among the theatergoers that a girl of dazzling beauty was to appear in the ballet at the Court Theater. No one had yet seen that much-discussed phenomenon, but report spread her name from mouth to mouth; it was Satanella. The moment the bevy of supple figures in fluttering petticoats sprang on the stage every opera glass in the boxes and stalls was directed toward them, and at the same instant the new dancer was discovered, although she timidly kept in the background.

She was one of those girls who have the imprint of purity but at the same time present a splendid type of womanhood. She had the voluptuous form of Rubens' second wife, whom they called, not inappropriately, a Greek Helen, and her head with its delicate nose, its small full mouth, and its dark inquiring eyes, reminded people of the celebrated picture of the Flemish Venus in the Belvedere in Vienna.

She took the old guard of the Vienna Court Theater by storm, and the very next morning a perfect shower of *billets-doux,* jewels, and bouquets fell into the poor ballet girl's attic. For a moment

she was dazzled by all this splendor, and looked at the gold bracelets, the brooches set with rubies and emeralds, and at the sparkling earrings, with flushed cheeks. But then an unspeakable terror of being lost and of sinking into degradation seized her, and she pushed the jewels away and was about to send them back. But, as is usual in such cases, her mother intervened in favor of "the generous gentlemen," and so the jewels were accepted, though the notes which accompanied them were not answered at present. A second and a third discharge of Cupid's artillery followed, without making any impression on the girl; a great number of her admirers fell off consequently, though some continued to send her presents and to assail her with love letters, and one had the courage to go still further.

He was a wealthy banker who called on the mother of Henrietta, the fair-haired ballet girl, and then one evening, quite unexpectedly, on the girl herself. He by no means met with the reception which he had expected from the pretty girl in a faded cotton gown. Henrietta treated him with a certain amount of good-humored respect, which had a much more unpleasant effect on him than that coldness and prudery which is so often synonymous with the coquetry and selfish speculation of a certain class of women. In spite of everything, however, he soon went to see her daily, and lavished his wealth on the beautiful dancer, although she asked for nothing, and he gave her no chance to refuse. The mother took pretty, small apartments for her daughter and herself in the Kärntnerstrasse and furnished them elegantly, hired a cook and housemaid, made an arrangement with a cabman, and clothed her daughter in silk, velvet, and valuable lace.

Henrietta said nothing except once when she remarked to her mother, in the presence of her admirer:

"Have you won a prize in the lottery?"

"Of course I have," her mother replied, with a laugh.

The girl, however, had given her heart elsewhere, and quite contrary to all precedent, to a man whose very name she was ignorant of, and who sent her no diamonds, and not even any flowers. But he was young and good-looking, and stood so retiringly, and so evidently in love, at the small side door of the Opera House every night, when she got out of her antediluvian rickety cab, and also when she got into it again after the performance, that she could not help noticing him. Soon he began to follow her wherever she went, and once he summoned up courage to speak to her when she had been to see a friend in a remote suburb. He was very nervous, but all that he said seemed very clear and logical, and she did not hesitate for a moment to confess that she returned his love.

"You have made me the happiest, and at the same time the most wretched, of men," he said, after a pause.

"What do you mean?" she said innocently.

"Do you not belong to another man?" he asked her in a sad voice.

She shook her abundant light curls.

"Up till now I have belonged to myself alone and I will prove it to you by requesting you to call upon me frequently and without restraint. Every one shall know that we are lovers. I am not ashamed of loving an honorable man, but I will not sell myself."

"But your splendid apartments and your dresses," her lover interposed shyly, "you cannot pay for them out of your salary."

"My mother has won a large prize in the lottery or made a hit on the Stock Exchange." And with these words the determined girl cut short all further explanations.

That same evening the young man paid his first visit, to the horror of the girl's mother, who was so interested in stocks, and he came again the next day, and nearly every day. Her mother's reproaches were of no more avail than the furious looks of the stockbroker, and when the latter one day asked for an explanation as to certain visits, the girl said proudly:

"That is very soon explained. He loves me and I love him, and I have promised to marry him."

He certainly did understand the explanation and disappeared, and with him the shower of gold ceased.

The mother cried and the daughter laughed. "I never gave the worn-out old rake any hopes, and what does it matter to me what bargain you made with him? I always thought that you had been lucky on the Stock Exchange. Now, however, we must seriously consider about giving up our apartments, and make up our minds to live as we did before."

"Are you really capable of making such a sacrifice for me as to renounce luxury and to share my poverty?" her lover said.

"Certainly I am! Is not that a matter of course when one loves?" the ballet girl replied, in surprise.

"Then let me inform you, my dear Henrietta,"

he said, "that I am not so poor as you think. I only wished to find out whether I could make myself loved for my own sake; I have done so. I am Count L——, and though I am a minor and dependent on my parents, yet I have enough to be able to retain your pretty rooms for you, and to offer you if not a luxurious, at any rate a comfortable, existence."

On hearing this, mama dried her tears immediately. Count L—— became the girl's acknowledged lover, and they passed the happiest hours together. Unselfish as the girl was, she was yet such a thoroughly ingenuous Viennese that whenever she saw anything that took her fancy, whether it was a dress, a cloak, or one of those pretty little ornaments for a side table, she used to express her admiration in such terms that Count L—— felt obliged to make her a present of the object in question. In this way he incurred enormous debts, which his father paid. At last, however, he inquired into the cause of all this extravagance, and when he discovered it, he gave his son the choice of giving up the dancer or of relinquishing all claims on the paternal fortune.

It was a sorrowful evening when Count L—— told Henrietta of his father's determination.

"If I do not give you up I shall be able to do nothing for you," he said at last, "and I do not even know how I should manage to live myself, for my father is just the man to allow me to want, if I defy him. That, however, is a very secondary consideration; but as a man of honor I cannot bind you, who have every right to luxury and enjoyment, and so I must set you at liberty from the moment that I cannot provide for you."

"But I will not give you up," Henrietta said proudly.

The young Count shook his head sadly.

"Do you love me?" the ballet girl said quickly.

"More than my life."

"Then we will not separate as long as I have anything," she continued.

And she would not give him up, and when his father actually turned Count L—— into the street she provided a home for both of them. He obtained a situation as a copyist clerk in a lawyer's office, and she sold her valuable dresses and jewels, and thus they lived for more than a year.

The young man's father did not appear to trouble his head about them, but nevertheless he knew everything that went on in their small home, and knew every article that the ballet girl sold; until at last, softened by such love and strength of character, he himself made the first advances to a reconciliation with his son.

And now Henrietta wears the diamonds which formerly belonged to the old Countess, and it is long since she was a ballet girl. She now sits by the side of her husband in a carriage bearing their coat-of-arms.

AN HONEST IDEAL

THERE is one among my numerous friends in Vienna, an author, who has always amused me by his childish idealism.

Not by his idealism from an abstract point of view, for in spite of my pessimism I am an absurd idealist, and because I am perfectly well aware of this I as a rule never laugh at people's idealism, but his sort of idealism was really too funny.

He was a serious man of great capabilities who only just fell short of being learned, with a clear, critical intellect; a man without any illusions about society, the State, literature, or anything else, and especially not about women; but yet he was the craziest optimist as soon as he got upon the subject of actresses, theatrical princesses, and heroines; he was one of those men who, like Hackländer, cannot

discover the Ideal of Virtue anywhere except in a ballet girl.

My friend was always in love with some actress or other; of course only platonically, and from preference with some girl of rising talent, whose literary knight he constituted himself, until the time came when her admirers laid something much more substantial than laurel wreaths at her feet; then he withdrew and sought for fresh talent which would allow itself to be patronized by him.

He was never without the photograph of his ideal in his breast pocket, and when he was in a good temper he used to show me one or the other of them whom I had never seen, with a knowing smile, and once, when we were sitting in a café in the Prater, he took out a portrait without saying a word and laid it on the table before me.

It was the portrait of a beautiful woman, but what struck me in it first of all was not the almost classic cut of her features but her white eyes.

"If she had not the black hair of a living woman I should take her for a statue," I said.

"Certainly," my friend replied; "for a statue of Venus, perhaps for the Venus of Milo herself."

"Who is she?"

"A young actress."

"That is a matter of course in your case; what I meant was, what is her name?"

My friend told me, and it was a name which is at present one of the best-known on the German stage, with which a number of mundane adventures are connected, as every Viennese knows, compared with which those of Venus herself were only innocent toying, but which I then heard for the first time.

My idealist described her as a woman of the highest talent, which I believed, and as an angel of purity—which I did not believe; on that particular occasion, however, I at any rate did not believe the contrary.

A few days later I was accidentally turning over the leaves of the portrait album of another intimate friend of mine, who was a thoroughly careless, somewhat dissolute Viennese, and I came across that strange female face with the dead eyes again.

"How did you come by the picture of this Venus?" I asked him.

"Well, she certainly is a Venus," he replied, "but one of that cheap kind who are to be met with in the Graben, which is their ideal grove."

"Impossible!"

"I give you my word of honor it is so."

I could say nothing more after that. So my intellectual friend's new ideal, that woman of the highest dramatic talent, that wonderful woman with the white eyes, was a Venus of a very common type indeed!

But my friend was right in one respect. He had not deceived himself with regard to her wonderful dramatic gifts, and she very soon made a career for herself; for, from being a mute character on a suburban stage, she rose in two years to be the leading actress at one of the principal theaters.

My friend interested himself in her behalf with the manager, who was not blinded by any prejudices. She acted in a rehearsal and pleased him; whereupon he sent her to star in the provinces, and my friend accompanied her and took care she was well advertised.

She went on the boards as Schiller's Marie Stuart and achieved the most brilliant success, and before she had finished her starring tour obtained an engagement at a large theater in a Northern town, where her appearance was the signal for a triumphal success.

Her reputation, that is her reputation as a most gifted actress, grew very high in less than a year, and the manager of the Court Theater invited her to star at that house.

She was received with some suspicion at first, but she soon overcame all prejudices and doubts; the applause grew more and more vehement at every act, and at the close of the performance her future was decided. She obtained a splendid engagement, and soon afterward became an actress at the Court Theater.

A well-known author wrote a racy novel of which she was the heroine; one of the leading bankers and financiers was at her feet; she was the most popular personage and the lionesss of the capital; she had splendid apartments, and all her surroundings were of the most luxurious character. She had reached that height in her career at which my idealistic friend, who had constituted himself her literary knight, quietly took his leave of her, and went in search of fresh talent.

But the beautiful woman with the dead eyes and the dead heart seemed to be destined to be the scourge of the idealists, quite against her will, for scarcely had one unfolded his wings and flown away from her than another fell out of the nest into her net.

A very young student who was neither handsome nor of good family, and certainly not rich or

even well off, but who was enthusiastic, intellectual, and impressionable, saw her as Marie Stuart, as the Maid of Orleans, the Lady with the Camellias, and most of the plays of the best French writers, for the manager was making experiments with her, and she was doing the same with her talents.

The poor student was enraptured with the celebrated actress, and at the same time conceived a passion for the woman which bordered on madness.

He saved up penny by penny, he nearly starved himself, only in order that he might be able to pay for a seat in the gallery whenever she acted, and be able to devour her with his eyes. He always got a seat in the front row, for he was always outside three hours before the doors opened so as to be one of the first to gain his Olympus, the seat of the theatrical enthusiasts; he grew pale and his heart beat violently when she appeared; he laughed when she laughed, shed tears when she wept, applauded her as if he had been paid to do it, and yet she did not know him and was ignorant of his very existence.

The regular frequenters of the Court Theater noticed him at last, and spoke about his infatuation for her, until at last she heard about him, but still did not know him, and although he could not send her any costly jewelry and not even a bouquet, yet at last he succeeded in attracting her attention.

When the play was over and the theater had been empty for some time and she left it, wrapped in valuable furs, and got into the carriage of her banker, which was waiting for her at the stage door, he always stood there, often up to his ankles in snow or in the pouring rain.

At first she did not notice him, but when her

maid said something to her in a whisper on one occasion, she looked round in surprise, and he got a look from those large eyes which were not dead then, but dark and bright; a look which recompensed him for all his sufferings and filled him with proud hopes which constantly gained more power over the young idealist who was usually so modest.

At last there was a thorough, silent understanding between the theatrical princess and the dumb adorer. When she put her foot on the carriage step she looked round at him, and every time he stood there devouring her with his eyes; she saw it and got contentedly into her carriage, but she did not see how he ran after her carriage, and how he reached her house out of breath when she did, nor how he lay down outside after the door had closed behind her.

One stormy summer night, when the wind was howling in the chimneys and the rain was beating against the windows and on the pavement, the poor student was again lying on the stone steps outside her house, when the front door was opened very cautiously and quietly; for it was not the parsimonious banker who was leaving the house, but a wealthy young officer whom the maid was letting out. He kissed the pretty little Cerberus as he put a gold coin into her hand, and then accidentally stepped on the idealist, who was lying outside.

They all three simultaneously uttered a cry; the girl blew out the candle, the officer instinctively half drew his sword, and the student ran away.

Ever since that night the poor, crazy fellow went about with a dagger, which he concealed in his belt, and it was his constant companion to the theater and the stage door when the actress's carriage used

to wait for her, and to her house, where he nightly kept his painful watch.

His first idea was to kill his fortunate rival, then himself, then the theatrical princess, but at last he lay down again outside her door or stood on the pavement and watched the shadows that flitted hither and thither on her window, his head turned by the magic spell of the lovely actress.

And then the most incredible thing happened, something which he could never have hoped for, and which he scarcely believed when it did occur.

One evening when she had been playing a very important part she kept her carriage waiting much longer than usual, but at last she appeared and got into it. She did not shut the door, however, but beckoned to the young idealist to follow her.

He was almost delirious with joy, just as a moment before he had been almost mad with despair, and obeyed her immediately, and during the drive he knelt at her feet and covered her hands with kisses. She allowed it quietly and even merrily, and when the carriage stopped at her door she let him lift her out of the carriage and went upstairs leaning on his arm.

There the lady's maid showed him into a luxuriously furnished drawing-room, while the actress changed her dress.

Presently she appeared in her dressing-gown, sat down carelessly in an easy-chair, and asked him to sit down beside her.

"You take a great interest in me?" she said.

"You are my ideal!" the student cried enthusiastically.

The theatrical princess smiled and said:

"Well, I will at any rate be an honest ideal; I

will not deceive you, and you shall not be able to say that I have misused your youthful enthusiasm."

"Oh, heavens!" the poor idealist exclaimed, throwing himself at her feet.

"Wait a moment! Wait a moment!" she said, with a smile. "I have not finished yet. I can only love a man who is in a position to provide me with all those luxuries which I demand, or, if you like, which an actress cannot do without. As far as I know you are poor, but your constant attention to me, without encouragement, has interested me, and I have invited you here, only to-night, however, and in return you must promise me not to rave about me, or to follow me, from to-night. Will you do this?"

The wretched idealist was kneeling before her; he was having a terrible mental struggle.

"Will you promise me to do this?" she said again.

"Yes," he said, almost groaning.

When he left her he was a man who had buried his ideal. He was almost as pale as a corpse; but in spite of this he is still alive, and if he has any ideal at all at present it is certainly not a theatrical princess.

VIOLATED

"IS it true?" exclaimed Paul; "is it true?"

"It is indeed. I who stand here before you was violated, violated by—— But if I should tell you at once by whom there would be no story, would there? And as you want a story, I will tell you all about it from beginning to end, and I shall begin at the beginning.

"I had been shooting for a week over the waste land in the heart of Brittany, which borders on the Black Mountain. It is a desolate and wild country, but it abounds in game. One can walk for hours without meeting a human being, and when one meets anybody it is just the same as if one had not, for the people are absolutely ignorant of French, and when I got to an inn at night I had to employ signs to let the people know that I wanted supper and bed.

"As I happened to be in a melancholy frame of mind at the time, that solitude delighted me, and

my dog's companionship was quite enough for me, and so you may guess my irritation when I perceived one morning that I was being followed, absolutely followed, by another sportsman who seemed to wish to enter into conversation with me. The day before I had already noticed him obstructing the horizon several times, and I had attributed it to the chance of sport, which brought us both to the same likely spots for game, but now I could not be mistaken! The fellow was evidently following me, and was stretching his short legs as much as he could, so as to keep up with my long strides, and took short cuts, so as to catch up with me by circumventing me.

" As he seemed determined, I naturally grew obstinate, also, and he spent his whole day in trying to keep up with me, while I spent mine in trying to baffle him, and we seemed to be playing at hide-and-seek; the consequences were that when it became dark I had completely lost myself in the most deserted part of the moor. There was no cottage near, not even a church spire in the distance. The only landmark was the hateful outline of that cursed man, about five hundred yards off.

" Of course he won the game! I should have to put a good face on the matter, and allow him to join me, or, rather, I should have to join him myself, if I did not wish to sleep in the open air with an empty stomach, and so I went up to him and inquired the way in a half-surly manner.

" He replied very affably that there was no inn in the neighborhood, as the nearest village was five leagues off, but that he lived within half an hour's walk, and considered himself very fortunate in being able to offer me hospitality.

"I was utterly exhausted, and how could I refuse? So we went off through the heather and furze, I walking slowly because I was so tired, and he went tripping along merrily with legs which seemed untiring, like a basset hound's.

"And yet he was an old man and not strongly built, for I could have knocked him over by blowing on him; but how he could walk, the beast!

"But he was not a troublesome companion, as I imagined he would be, and he did not at all seem to wish to enter into conversation with me, as I feared he would. When he had given his invitation, and I had accepted it and thanked him in a few words, he did not open his lips again, and we walked on in silence; but his glances worried me, for I felt them on me, as if he wished to force me into an intimacy which my closed lips refused. But, on the whole, his persistent looks, which I noticed furtively, appeared sympathetic and even admiring—yes, really admiring!

"But I could not repay him in kind, for he was certainly not handsome; his legs were short and rather bowed, and he was thin and narrow-chested. His face was like a bit of parchment, furrowed and wrinkled, without a hair on it to hide the folds in his skin. His hair resembled that of an Ignorantin brother, with its gray locks falling over his greasy collar; he had a nose like a ferret, and rat's eyes; but he was able to offer me food and quarters for the night, and it was not requisite that he should be handsome in order to do that.

"Capital food and very comfortable quarters! A manorial dwelling, a real old, well-furnished manor-house; and in the large dining-room, in front of the huge fireplace, where a large fire was blazing,

dinner was laid; I will say no more than that! A hotch-potch, which had been stewed since morning, no doubt! A *salmis* of woodcock, in defense of which angels would have taken up arms; buckwheat cakes in cream flavored with aniseed, and a cheese, which is a rare thing and hardly ever to be found in Brittany, a cheese to make any one eat a four-pound loaf if he only smelled the rind! The whole accompanied by Chambertin, and then apple brandy from cider, which was so good that it made a man fancy that he had swallowed a deity in velvet breeches; not to mention the cigars, pure, smuggled Havanas; large, strong, not dry, but green on the contrary, which made a strong and intoxicating smoke.

"And how the little old gentleman stuffed, and drank, and smoked! He was an ogre, a chorister, a sapper, and so was I, I must confess, and, upon my word, I cannot remember what we talked about during our Gargantuan feed! But we certainly did talk, but about what? About shooting, certainly, and about women most probably. Confound it! Among men, after drinking! Yes, yes, about women, I am quite sure, and he told some funny stories, did the little old man! Especially about a portrait which was hanging over the large fireplace, and which represented his grandmother, a marquise of the old régime. She was a woman who had certainly been rather gay; and they said that she was still frisky and had good legs and thighs when she was seventy.

"'It is extraordinary,' I remarked, 'how like you are to that portrait.'

"'Yes,' the old man replied, with a smile; and then he added, in his harsh, tremulous voice: 'I re-

semble her in everything. I am only sixty, and I feel as if I should have lusty, hot blood in me until I am seventy.'

"And then suddenly, very much moved and looking at me admiringly, as he had done once before, he said to the portrait:

"'I say, Marquise, what a pity that you did not know this handsome young fellow!'

"I remembered that apostrophe and that look very well when I went to bed about an hour later, nearly drunk, in the large room papered in white and gold to which I was shown by a tall, broad-shouldered footman, who wished me good night in Breton.

"Good night, yes! But that implied going to sleep, which was just what I could not do. The Chambertin, the cider brandy, and the cigars had certainly made me drunk, but not so as to overcome me altogether. On the contrary, I was excited, my nerves were highly strung, my blood was heated, and I was in a half-sleep in which I felt that I was very much alive, and my whole being was in a vibration and expansion, just as if I had been smoking hasheesh.

"Of course! That was it; I was dreaming while I was awake; but I saw the door open and the Marquise, who had stepped down out of her frame, come in. She had taken off her furbelows, and was in her nightgown. Her powdered hair was now simply gathered in a knot and tied with a bow of ribbon, instead of *à la Pompadour,* but I recognized her quite plainly by the trembling light of the candle which she carried. It was her face, with its piercing eyes, its sharp nose, and its smiling and sensual mouth. She did not look so young to me as she

appeared in her portrait. Bah! Perhaps that was merely because of the feeble, flickering light! But I had not even time to account for it, nor to reflect on the strangeness of the sight, nor to discuss the matter with myself and say: 'Am I dead drunk or is it a ghost?'

"No, I had no time, and that is the fact, for the candle was suddenly blown out and the Marquise was in my bed and holding me in her arms; and one fixed idea, the only one that I had, haunted me.

"'Had the Marquise good limbs and was she still frisky at seventy?' And I did not care much if she was seventy and if she was a ghost or not; I only thought of one thing: 'Has she really good limbs?'

"By Jove, yes! She did not speak. Oh, Marquise! Marquise! And suddenly, in spite of myself and to convince myself that it was not a mere fantastic dream, I exclaimed:

"'Why, good heavens! I am not dreaming!'

"'No, you are not dreaming,' two lips replied, trying to press themselves against mine.

"But, oh, horror! The mouth smelt of cigars and brandy! The voice was that of the little old man!

"With a bound I sent him flying on to the ground, and jumped out of bed, shouting:

"'Beast! beast!'

"Then I heard the door slam and bare feet pattering on the stairs as he ran away; so I dressed hastily in the dark and went downstairs, still shouting.

"In the hall below, where I could see through the upper windows that the dawn was breaking, I met the broad-shouldered footman, who was hold-

ing a great cudgel in his hand. He was bawling, also, in Breton, and pointed to the open door, outside which my dog was waiting. What could I say to this savage who did not speak French? Should I face his cudgel? There was no reason for doing so; and, besides, I was even more ashamed than furious; so I hastily took up my gun and my game bag, which were in the hall, and went off without turning round.

"Disgusted with sport in that part of the country, I returned to Brest the same day, and there, timidly and with many precautions, I tried to find out something about the little old man.

"'Oh, I know!' somebody replied at last to my question; 'you are speaking of the manor-house at Hervénidozse, where the old Countess lives who dresses like a man and sleeps with her coachman.'

"And, with a deep sigh of relief, and much to the astonishment of my informant, I replied:

"'Oh! so much the better!'"

DELILA

IT is no exaggeration to say that Wanda von Chabert, whose acquaintance we made in a former reminiscence and who had frequently aided the police in former years, was the cleverest, the most charming, and the most selfish woman one could possibly meet. Neither her face nor her figure was symmetrical enough for beauty; but if she were not cast in the mold of the antique and resembled neither the Venus of Milo nor Juno, her style was none the less charming, and suggested the subjects of Watteau and Mignard. Everything in her little face, in its frame of soft brown hair, was attractive and seductive, her low Grecian forehead, her bright, almond-shaped eyes, her small nose and her full, voluptuous lips, her medium height and her small waist with its perhaps almost too full bust, and above all her walk, that half-indolent, half-coquettish swaying of her hips, were all maddeningly alluring.

And this woman, who was born for love, was as eager for pleasure as few other women have ever been, but for that very reason she never ran any danger of allowing her victims to escape her from pity; on the contrary, she soon grew tired of each of her favorites, and her connection with the police was then extremely useful to her, in order to get rid of an inconvenient or jealous lover.

Before the war between Austria and Italy in 1859, Frau von Chabert was in London, where she lived alone in a small one-story house with her servants, and was in constant communication with emigrants from all countries.

She herself was thought to be a Polish refugee, and the luxury by which she was surrounded, and a fondness for sport, and above all for horses, which was remarkable even in England, made people give her the title of Countess. At that period Count T—— was one of the most prominent members of the Hungarian propaganda, and Frau von Chabert was commissioned to pay particular attention to all he said and did; but in spite of all the trouble she took she had not hitherto even succeeded in making his acquaintance. He lived the life of a misanthrope, quite apart from the great social stream of London, and he was not believed to be either gallant or ardent in love. Fellow countrymen of his, who had known him formerly during the Magyar revolution, described him as very cautious, cold, and silent, so that if any man possessed a charm against the toils which she set for him, it was he.

Just then it happened that as Wanda was riding in Hyde Park quite early one morning before many people were about, her thoroughbred English mare took fright, and threatened to throw the plucky

rider, who did not for a moment lose her presence of mind. Before her groom had time to come to her assistance, a man in a Hungarian braided coat rushed from the path and caught hold of the animal's bridle. When the mare had become quiet he was about to go away with a slight bow, but Frau von Chabert detained him so that she might thank him, and had leisure to examine him more closely. He was neither young nor handsome, but was well made, as are all Hungarians, and had an interesting and very expressive face. His sallow complexion was set off by a short black full beard, and he looked as if he were suffering, while he fixed two great, black, fanatical eyes on the beautiful young woman, who was smiling at him so amiably, and it was the strange look in those large eyes which aroused in the soul of that woman who was so very excitable that violent but fleeting sensation which she called love. She turned her horse and accompanied the stranger. He seemed to be even more charmed by her chatter than by her appearance, for his grave face grew more and more animated, and at last he himself became quite friendly and talkative. When he took leave of her Wanda gave him her card, on the back of which her address was written, and he immediately gave her his in return.

She thanked him and rode off, looking at his name as she did so; it was Count T——.

She felt inclined to give a shout of pleasure when she found that the noble quarry which she had been hunting so long had at last come into her preserves, but she did not even turn her head round to look at him, such was the command which that woman had over herself and her movements.

Count T—— called upon her the very next day; soon he came every day, and in less than a month after that innocent adventure in Hyde Park he was at her feet; for when Frau von Chabert made up her mind to be loved nobody was able to withstand her. She became the Count's confidante, and every day, and almost every hour, she, with the most delicate coquetry, laid fresh fetters on the Hungarian Samson. Did she love him?

Certainly she did, after her own fashion, and at first she had not the remotest idea of betraying him; she even succeeded in completely concealing her association with him, not only in London but also in Vienna.

Then the war of 1859 broke out, and, like most Hungarian and Polish refugees, Count T—— hurried off to Italy, in order to place himself at the disposal of that great patriotic Piedmontese statesman, Cavour.

Wanda followed him and took the greatest interest in his revolutionary intrigues in Turin; for some time she seemed to be his right hand, and it looked as if she had become unfaithful to her present patrons. Through his means she was soon on intimate terms with Piedmontese government circles, and that proved his destruction.

A young Italian diplomatist, who frequently negotiated with Count T——, or in his absence with Wanda, fell madly in love with the charming Polish woman, and she, who was never cruel, more especially when her affections were involved, allowed herself to be conquered by the handsome, intellectual, daring man. In measure as her passion for the Italian increased, her affection for Count T—— diminished, and at last she felt that he was nothing

but a hindrance and a burden, and as soon as Wanda had reached that point her adorer was as good as lost.

Count T—— was not a man whom she could just coolly dismiss, or with whom she might venture to trifle, and that she knew perfectly well; so in order to avoid a catastrophe the consequences of which might be disastrous for her, she did not let him notice the change in her feelings toward him at first, and kept the Italian at a proper distance.

When peace had been concluded and the great, peaceful revolution, which found its provisional settlement in the constitution of February and in the Hungarian agreement, began in Austria, the Hungarian refugees determined to send Count T—— to Hungary that he might assume the direction of affairs there. But as he was still an outlaw and as the death sentence of Arad hung over his head like the sword of Damocles, he consulted with Wanda about the ways and means of reaching his fatherland unharmed and of remaining there undiscovered. Although that clever woman thought of a plan immediately, yet she told Count T—— that she would think the matter over, and did not bring forward her proposition for a few days. It was then, however, received by the Count and his friends with the highest approval, and was immediately carried into execution. Frau von Chabert went to Vienna as Marchioness Spinola, and T—— accompanied her as her footman; he had cut his hair short and shaved off his beard; so that in his livery he was quite unrecognizable. They crossed the frontier in safety, and reached Vienna without any interference from the authorities; and there they first of all went to a small hotel, but she soon took a small, handsome

apartment in the center of the town. Count T—— immediately hunted up some members of his party, who had been in constant communication with the emigrants since Vilagos, and the conspiracy was soon set on foot, while Wanda passed away her time with a hussar officer, without, however, losing sight of her lover and of his dangerous activity for a moment on that account.

And at last, when the fruit was ready to fall into her lap, she was sitting in the private room of the Minister of Police, opposite to the man with whom she was going to make the evil compact.

"The emigrants must be very uneasy and disheartened at an agreement and reconciliation with Hungary," he began.

"Do not deceive yourself," Frau von Chabert replied; "nothing is more dangerous in politics than optimism, and the influence of the revolutionary propaganda was never greater than it is at present. Do not hope to conciliate the Magyars by half concessions, and, above all things, do not underestimate the movement which is being organized openly in broad daylight."

"You are afraid of a revolution?"

"I know that they are preparing for one, and that they expect everything from that alone."

The skeptical man smiled.

"Give me something besides views and opinions, and then I will believe . . ."

"I will give you the proof," Wanda said, "but before I do you the greatest service that lies in my power I must be sure that I shall be rewarded for all my skill and trouble."

"Can you doubt it?"

"I will be open with you," Wanda continued.

"During the insurrectionary war in Transylvania Urban had excellent spies, but they have not been paid to this day. I want money . . ."

"How much?"

With inimitable ease the beautiful woman mentioned a very considerable sum. The skeptical man got up to give a few orders, and a short time afterward the money was in Wanda's hands.

"Well?"

"The emigrants have sent one of their most influential and talented members to organize the revolution in Hungary."

"Have they sent him already?"

"More than that, for Count T—— is in Vienna at this moment."

"Do you know where he is hiding?"

"Yes."

"And you are sure that you are not mistaken?"

"I am most assuredly not mistaken," she replied, with a frivolous laugh; "Count T——, who was my admirer in London and Turin, is here in my house as my footman."

An hour later the Count was arrested. But Wanda only wished to get rid of her tiresome adorer, and not to destroy him. She had been on intimate terms with him long enough and had taken such a part in his political plans and intrigues as to be able to give the most reliable information about him personally as well as about his intentions; and that information was such that, in spite of the past and of the Count's revolutionary standpoint, they thought they had discovered in him the man who was capable of bringing about a real reconciliation between the monarch and his people. In consequence of this T——, who thought that he had in-

curred the gallows, stood in the Emperor's presence, and the manner in which the latter expressed his generous intentions with regard to Hungary carried the old rebel away, and he gave him his word of honor that he would bring the nation back to him, reconciled. And he kept his word, although, perhaps, not exactly in keeping with the sense in which he gave it.

He was allowed full liberty in going to Hungary, and Wanda accompanied him. He had no suspicion that even in her arms he was under police supervision, and from the moment he made his appearance in his native land officially, as the intermediary between the crown and the people, she had a fresh interest in binding to herself a man of such importance, whom everybody regarded as Hungary's future Minister-President.

He began to negotiate, and at first everything went well, but soon the yielding temper of the government gave rise continually to fresh demands, and before long what one side offered and the other side demanded were so far apart that no immediate agreement could be thought of. The Count's position grew more painful every day; he had pledged himself too deeply to both sides, and in vain he sought for a way out of the difficulty.

Then one day the Minister of Police unexpectedly received a letter from Wanda, in which she told him that T——, urged on by his fellow countrymen and branded as a traitor by the emigrants, was on the point of heading a fresh conspiracy.

Thereupon the government energetically reminded that thoroughly honest and noble man of his word of honor, and T——, who saw that he was unable to keep it, ended his life by a pistol bullet.

Frau von Chabert left Hungary immediately after the sad catastrophe and went to Turin, where new lovers, new splendors, and new laurels awaited her.

We may, perhaps, hear more of her.

A GOOD MATCH

THE young sergeant of hussars, Max B——, had nothing better to do in the afternoon when he was off duty than to drink a glass of beer and listen to a new waltz. Strauss's band was playing in the hall of the Horticultural Society, which was so crowded that the young cadet could not find a seat. Presently the head waiter, who knew him, quickly took him to an unoccupied place, and without waiting for his orders brought him a glass of beer. A very gentlemanly looking man and three elegantly dressed ladies were sitting at the table.

The cadet saluted them with military politeness and sat down, but almost before he could put the glass to his lips he noticed that the two older ladies, who appeared to be married, seemed annoyed at his taking a seat at their table, and even said a few

words which he could not catch but which no doubt referred unpleasantly to him. "I am afraid I am in the way here," the cadet said, and he got up to leave, when he felt a pull at his *sabretache* beneath the table, and at the same time the gentleman felt bound to say, with some embarrassment: "Oh! not at all; on the contrary we are very pleased that you have chosen this table."

Thereupon the cadet resumed his seat, not so much because he took the gentleman's invitation as sincere, but because the silent request to remain which he had received under the table, and which was much more sincerely meant, had raised in him with electrical rapidity one of those charming illusions which are so frequent in our youth and which promise so much happiness. He could not doubt for a moment that the daring invitation came from the third, the youngest and prettiest, of the ladies into whose company a fortunate accident had thrown him.

From the moment that he had sat down by her, however, she did not deign to bestow even another look on him, much less a word, and to the young hussar, who was still rather inexperienced in such matters, this seemed rather strange; but he possessed enough natural tact not to expose himself to a rebuff by any hasty advances, but quietly awaited further developments. This gave him the opportunity of looking at the young lady more closely, and he did so when their attention was diverted from him and they were conversing among themselves.

The girl, whom the others called Angelica, was a thorough Viennese beauty, not regularly beautiful, for her features were not Roman or Greek, and

not even strictly German, and yet they possessed every female charm, and were seductive in the fullest sense of the word. Her strikingly small nose, which in a lady's maid might have been called impudent, and her little mouth with its voluptuously full lips, which would have been called sensual in an ordinary person, imparted an indescribably piquant charm to her small head, which was surmounted by an imposing tower of that soft brown hair which is so characteristic of Viennese women. Her bright eyes were full of intelligence and a merry smile lurked continually in the most charming little dimples near her mouth and on her chin.

In less than a quarter of an hour our cadet was fettered, with no more will of his own than a slave, to the triumphal chariot of this delightful little creature, and as he hoped and believed—forever. And he was a man worth capturing. He was tall and slim, though muscular, and looked like an athlete, and at the same time he had one of those handsome, open faces which women like so much. His honest dark eyes showed strength of will, courage, and strong passions, and that women also admire.

During an interval in the music an elderly gentleman, with the ribbon of an order in his buttonhole, came up to the table, and from the manner in which he greeted them it was evident that he was an old friend. From their conversation, which was carried on in a very loud tone of voice and with much animation, in the bad form of the Viennese, the cadet gathered that the gentleman who was with the ladies was a Councilor of Legation, and that the eldest lady was his wife, while the second lady was his married, and the youngest his unmarried, sister-in-law. When they at last rose to go, the

pretty girl, evidently intentionally, put her velvet jacket trimmed with valuable sable very loosely over her shoulders; then she remained standing at the exit and slowly put it on, so that the cadet had an opportunity to get close to her. "Follow us," she whispered to him, and then ran after the others.

The cadet was only too glad to obey her directions and followed them at a distance, without being observed, to the house where they lived. A week passed without his seeing the pretty Angelica again, or without her giving him any indication of her existence. The waiter in the Horticultural Society's grounds, of whom he inquired about them, could tell him nothing more than that they were people of position. A few days later the cadet saw them all again at a concert, but he was satisfied with looking at his ideal from a distance. She, however, when she could do so without danger, gave him one of those coquettish looks which inexperienced young men imagine express the innermost feelings of a pure virgin heart. On this occasion she left the grounds with her sisters much earlier, and as she passed the handsome cadet she let fall a small pellet of paper, which only contained the words: "Come at ten o'clock to-night, and ring the bell."

He was outside the house at the stroke of ten, and rang, but his astonishment knew no bounds when, instead of Angelica or her confidential maid, the housekeeper opened the door. She saw his confusion and quickly put an end to it by taking his hand and pulling him into the house. "Come with me," she whispered; "I know all about it. The young lady will be here directly, so come along." Then she led him through the kitchen into a room which was shut off from the rest of the house, and

which she had apparently furnished for similar meetings, on her own account, and left him there by himself, and the cadet was rather surprised at sight of the elegant furniture, the wide, soft couch, and some rather obscene pictures in broad gilt frames. In a few minutes the beautiful girl came in, and without any further ceremony threw her arms round the young soldier's neck. In her *négligée* she appeared to him much more beautiful than in her elegant outdoor dress, but the virginal fragrance which then pervaded her had given way to that voluptuous atmosphere which surrounds a young newly married woman.

Angelica, whose little feet were incased in blue velvet slippers lined with ermine, and who was wrapped in a richly embroidered, white *robe de chambre* trimmed with lace, drew the handsome cadet down on to the couch with graceful energy, and almost before he exactly knew what he had come for she was his, and the young soldier, who was half dazed at his unexpected victory and good fortune, did not leave her until after twelve o'clock. He returned every night at ten, rang the bell, and was admitted by the girl's slyly smiling confidante, and a few moments later was clasping his little goddess, who used to wrap her delicate white limbs sometimes in dark sable and at others in princely ermine. Every time they partook of a delicious supper, laughed and joked, and loved each other as only young, good-looking people do love, and frequently they entertained one another until morning.

Once the cadet attempted diffidently to pay the housekeeper for her services, and also for the supper, but she refused his money with a laugh, and

said that everything was already settled; and the young soldier had reveled in this manner in boundless bliss for four months when, by an unfortunate accident, he met his mistress in the street one day. She was alone, but in spite of this she contracted her delicate, finely arched eyebrows angrily when he was about to speak to her and turned her head away. This hurt the honest young fellow's feelings, and when that evening she drew him to her bosom, that was rising and falling tempestuously under the black velvet that covered it, he remonstrated with her quietly but emphatically. She made a little grimace, and looking at him coldly and angrily she at last said shortly: "I forbid you to take any notice of me out of doors. I do not choose to recognize you; do you understand?"

The cadet was surprised, and did not reply, but the harmony of his pleasures was destroyed by a harsh discord. For some time he bore his misery in silence and with resignation, but at last the situation became unendurable; his mistress's fiery kisses seemed to mock him, and the pleasure which she gave him to degrade him, so at last he summoned up courage, and in his open way he came straight to the point.

"What do you think of our future, Angelica?" She wrinkled her brows a little.

"Do not let us talk about it; at any rate not to-day."

"Why not? We must talk about it sooner or later," he replied, "and I think it is high time for me to explain my intentions to you if I do not wish to appear as a dishonorable scoundrel in your eyes."

She looked at him in surprise. "I look upon

you as one of the best and most honorable of men, Max," she said soothingly, after a pause.

"And do you trust me, also?"

"Of course I do."

"Are you convinced that I love you honestly?"

"Quite."

"Then do not hesitate any longer to bestow your hand upon me," her lover said, in conclusion.

"What are you thinking about?" she cried quickly, in a tone of refusal.

"What is to be the end of our connection? What is at any rate not permissible with a woman is wrong and dishonorable with a girl. You yourself must feel lowered if you do not become my wife as soon as possible."

"What a narrow-minded view!" Angelica replied angrily; "but as you wish it I will give you my opinion on the subject, but . . . by letter."

"No, no; now, directly."

The pretty girl did not speak for some time, and looked down, but suddenly she looked at her lover, and a malicious, mocking smile lurked in the corners of her mouth. "Well, I love you, Max, I love you really and ardently," she said carelessly; "but I can never be your wife. If you were an officer I might perhaps marry you; yes, I certainly would, but as it is, it is impossible."

"Is that your last word?" the cadet said, in great excitement.

She only nodded, and then put her full, white arms round his neck with all the security of a mistress who is granting some favor to her slave; but on that occasion she was mistaken. He sprang up, seized his sword, and hurried out of the room, and she let him go, for she felt certain that he would

come back again, but he did not do so, and when she wrote to him he did not answer her letters, and still did not come; so at last she gave him up.

It was a bad, very bad, experience for the honorable young fellow; the highborn, frivolous girl had trampled on all the ideals and illusions of his life with her small feet, for he then saw only too clearly that she had not loved him, but that he had only served her pleasures and her lusts, while he, he had loved her so truly.

* * * * * * *

About a year after the catastrophe with charming Angelica the handsome young cadet happened to be in his captain's quarters, and accidentally saw a large photograph of a lady on his writing table, and on going up and looking at it he recognized—Angelica.

"What a beautiful girl!" he said, wishing to find out how the land lay.

"That is the lady I am to marry," said the captain, whose vanity was flattered; "and she is as pure and as good as an angel, just as she is as beautiful as one, and into the bargain she comes of a very good and very rich family; in short, in the fullest sense of the word, she is 'a good match.'"

RELICS OF THE PAST

MY DEAR COLETTE: I do not know whether you remember a line by M. Sainte-Beuve which we read together, and which has remained fixed in my memory; for this verse speaks eloquently to me; and it has very often consoled my poor heart, especially latterly. Here it is:

"To be born, to live, and to die in the same house."

I am now all alone in this house where I was born, where I have lived, and where I hope to die. It is not always cheerful, but it is pleasant; for there I am surrounded by memories.

My son Henri is a barrister; he comes to see me twice a year. Jeanne is living with her husband at the other end of France, and I go to see her each autumn. So here I am, all, all alone, but surrounded by familiar objects which incessantly recall my own people, the dead, and the living separated from me by distance.

I no longer read much; I am too old for that; but I am constantly thinking, or, rather, dreaming. I do not dream as I used to long ago. You may recall our wild fancies, the adventures our brains conceived when we were twenty, and all the horizons of anticipated happiness.

None of our dreams came true; or, rather, something quite different took place, less charming, less poetic, but sufficient for those who know how to accept their lot in life bravely.

Do you know why we women are so often unhappy? It is because we are taught in our youth to believe too much in happiness! We are never brought up with the idea of fighting, of striving, of suffering. And at the first shock our hearts are broken. We look forward, with blind faith, to cascades of happy experiences. What does happen is at best but a partial happiness, and thereupon we burst out sobbing. I have learned to know what happiness, real happiness, is. It does not consist in experiencing some great bliss, for any great bliss is rare and fleeting, but is to be found in the endless expectation of a succession of joys which we never attain. Happiness is happy expectation; it is the horizon of hope; it is, therefore, endless illusion. Yes, my dear, illusion is all there is, and, old as I am, I still create illusions for myself every day I live; only their object is changed, my desires being no longer the same. I was telling you that I spend my brightest hours in dreaming. What else should I do?

I have two ways of doing this. I am going to tell you what they are; they may, perhaps, prove useful to you.

Oh! the first is very simple; it consists in sit-

ting down before my fire in a low armchair that rests my old bones, and looking back at the things of the past.

One life is so short, especially a life entirely spent in the same spot:

"To be born, to live, and to die in the same house."

Our recollections are massed, packed together, and when we are old, it sometimes seems no more than ten days since we were young. Yes; everything slips away from us, as if life itself were but a single day: morning, evening, and then comes night—a night without a dawn!

When I gaze into the fire, for hours at a time, the past rises up before me as though it were but yesterday. I no longer think of my present existence; reverie carries me away; once more I pass through all the changes of my life.

And I often am possessed by the illusion that I am a young girl, so many breaths of bygone days are wafted back to me, so many youthful sensations and even impulses, so many throbbings of my heart —all the passionate ardor of eighteen; and I have clear visions, as fresh as realities, of many things. Oh, how vividly, above all, do the memories of my walks as a young girl come back to me! There, in my armchair before the fire, I saw once again, a few nights since, a sunset on Mont Saint-Michel, and immediately afterward a horseback ride through the forest of Uville with the odors of damp sand and of flowers steeped in dew, and the warmth of the setting sun as it dipped on the horizon and its moist reflection on my face as I galloped through the brush. And all that I thought of then, my poetic enthusiasm at the sight of the boundless sea,

my keen delight at the rustling of the branches as I passed, my most trivial impressions, every fragment of thought, desire, or feeling, all, all came back to me as if I were there still, as if fifty years had not glided by since then to chill my blood and change my outlook. But my other way of reviving the long ago is much better.

You know, or you do not know, my dear Colette, that we destroy nothing in the house. We have upstairs, under the roof, a large room for discarded objects which we call "the room for relics." Everything that is no longer used is thrown there. I often go up there and gaze around me. Then I find once more a heap of trifles that I had forgotten, and that recall many things to my mind. They are not those dear old pieces of furniture which we have known since childhood and to which are attached recollections of events, of joys or sorrows, dates in our life, and which, from the fact of being intertwined with our lives, have assumed a kind of personality, a physiognomy; and which are the companions of our pleasant or gloomy hours, the only companions, alas! that we are sure not to lose, the only ones that will not die, like the others, whose features, whose loving eyes, whose lips, whose voices, have vanished forever. But I find instead, among the medley of discarded knick-knacks, those little old insignificant objects which have been at our side for forty years without ever having been noticed by us, and which, when we suddenly lay eyes on them again, have somehow the importance, the significance of relics of the past. They produce on my mind the effect of those people whom we have known for a very long time without ever having seen them as they really are, and who,

suddenly, some evening, unexpectedly break out into a stream of interminable talk, and tell us all their history, and private matters.

And I go from one object to the other with a little thrill in my heart every time something fixes my attention. I say to myself: "See there! I broke that the night Paul started for Lyons;" or else: "Ah! there is mamma's little lantern, which she used to carry with her going to her evening devotions on dark winter nights." There are even some things in this room which have no story to tell me, which have come down from my grandparents, things, therefore, whose history and adventures are utterly unknown to those who are living to-day, and whose very owners nobody knows now. Nobody has seen the hands that used to touch them or the eyes that used to gaze at them. These are the things that make me think long and earnestly. They represent to my mind lonely people whose last remaining friends are dead. You, my dear Colette, can scarcely comprehend all this, and you will smile at my simplicity, my childish, sentimental whims. You are a Parisian, and you Parisians do not understand this interior life, these eternal echoes of one's own heart. You live in the outer world, with all your thoughts in the open. Living alone as I do, I can only speak about myself. When you answer this letter, tell me a little about yourself, that I may also be able to put myself in your place, as you will be able to put yourself in mine to-morrow.

But you will never completely understand M. de Sainte-Beuve's verse:

"To be born, to live, and to die in one house."

A thousand kisses, my old friend. ADELAIDE.

THE WARDROBE

WE were talking of women, for want of something better, among a party of men, after dinner.

"Apropos of women, a funny thing happened to me once," said one of us. And he told us the following story:

"One evening last winter I felt suddenly overcome by that overpowering sense of sadness and languor which takes possession of one at times. I was alone in my own apartments, and was convinced that if I kept on living like that I should have a terrible attack of melancholia, one of those attacks that lead to suicide when they recur too often.

"I put on my overcoat and went out without the slightest idea of what I was about to do. Having gone as far as the boulevards, I began to wander along by the almost empty cafés. It was raining,

a fine rain that affects the mind as it does one's clothing, not one of those good downpours that come down in torrents, driving breathless passers-by into doorways, but a misty rain that deposits on your clothing an imperceptible spray and soon covers you with a sort of iced foam that chills you through.

" What should I do? I walked in one direction and then came back, looking for some place where I could spend two hours, and discovering for the first time that there is no place of amusement in Paris in the evening. At last I decided to go to the Folies Bergères, that entertaining market place for gay women.

" Very few persons were in the main hall. In the long horseshoe curve was only a small gathering of ordinary-looking people, whose plebeian origin was apparent in their manners, their clothes, the cut of their hair and beard, their hats, their complexions. Only here and there could one see a man one might suspect of having washed himself thoroughly, and his whole make-up seemed to match.

" As for the women, they were always the same, those frightful women you all know—ugly, tired-looking, drooping, and walking along in their rapid manner, with that foolish air of superciliousness which they assume, I do not know why.

" I thought that, in truth, not one of those languid creatures, greasy rather than fat, puffed out here, and thin there, with the shape of a monk and the lower extremities of a bow-legged snipe, was worth the single louis that each would obtain with great difficulty after asking five.

" But suddenly I saw a little creature whom I thought attractive; she was not in her first youth, but fresh, comical, and tantalizing. I stopped her,

and stupidly, without thinking, I made an arrangement with her for that night. I did not wish to go back to my own home alone, all alone; I preferred the company and the caresses of this hussy.

" I followed her. She lived in a large house in the Rue des Martyrs. The gas was already extinguished on the stairway. I ascended the steps slowly, lighting a candle-match every few seconds, stubbing my foot against the steps, stumbling and angry as I followed the rustle of the skirt ahead of me.

" She stopped on the fourth floor, and, having closed the outer door, she said:

" ' Then you will stay till to-morrow? '

" ' Why, yes. You know that that was the agreement.'

" ' All right, my dear; I just wanted to know. Wait for me here a minute; I will be right back.'

" And she left me in the darkness. I heard her shutting two doors, and then I thought I heard her talking. I was surprised and uneasy. The thought that she had a protector staggered me. But I have good fists and a solid back. ' We shall see,' I said to myself.

" I listened attentively with ear and mind. Some one was stirring about, walking quietly and very carefully. Then another door was opened and I thought I again heard some one talking, but in a very low tone.

" She came back, carrying a lighted candle.

" ' You may come in,' she said.

" The fact that she said *thou* in speaking to me was an indication of possession. I went in, and after passing through a dining-room in which it was very evident that no one ever ate, I entered a room

typical of all these women—a furnished room with rep curtains and a soiled eiderdown bed-covering.

"'Make yourself at home, *mon chat,*' she said.

"I gave a suspicious glance around the room, but no reason for uneasiness appeared.

"As she took off her wraps she began to laugh.

"'Well, what ails you? Are you changed into a pillar of salt? Come, hurry up!'

"I did as she suggested.

"Five minutes later I longed to put on my things and get out. But that terrible languor that had overcome me at home took possession of me again, and deprived me of energy enough to move, so I remained there, in spite of the disgust I felt for this association. The sensual attractiveness that I fancied I had discovered in this creature under the chandeliers of the theater had altogether vanished on closer acquaintance, and she was nothing more to me now than a common woman, like all the others, whose indifferent and complaisant kiss smacked of garlic.

"I thought I would say something.

"'Have you lived here long?' I asked.

"'More than six months on the fifteenth of January.'

"'Where were you before that?'

"'In the Rue Clauzel. But the janitor made me very uncomfortable, and I left.'

"She began to tell me an interminable story of a janitor who had talked scandal about her.

"But suddenly I heard something moving quite close to us. First there was a sigh, then a slight, but distinct sound as if some one had turned round on a chair.

"I sat up abruptly in bed.

" ' What was that noise? ' I demanded.

" ' Do not be uneasy, my dear boy,' she answered quietly and confidently; ' it is my neighbor. The partition is so thin that one can hear everything as if it were in the room. These are wretched walls, just like pasteboard.'

" I felt so lazy that I slid back under the covers. We resumed our conversation. Driven by the stupid curiosity that prompts all men to question these creatures about their first experience, to attempt to lift the veil from their first folly, as if to find in them a trace of pristine innocence, to love them possibly in a fleeting memory of their candor and modesty of former days, evoked by a word, I insistently asked her about her earlier lovers.

" I knew she was telling me lies. What did it matter? Among all these lies I might, perhaps, discover something sincere and touching.

" ' Come,' said I, ' tell me who he was.'

" ' He was a boating-man, my dear.'

" ' Ah! Tell me about it. Where were you? '

" ' I was at Argenteuil.'

" ' What were you doing? '

" ' I was waitress in a restaurant.'

" ' What restaurant? '

" ' The Freshwater Sailor. Do you know it? '

" ' I should say so, kept by Bonenfan.'

" ' Yes, that's it.'

" ' And how did he make love to you, this boatman? '

" ' While I was doing his room. He overcame me.'

" But I suddenly recalled the theory of a friend of mine, an observant and philosophical physician whom constant attendance in hospitals has brought

into daily contact with girl-mothers and prostitutes, with all the shame and all the misery of women, of those poor women who have become the frightful prey of the wandering male with money in his pocket.

" ' A woman,' he said, ' is always debauched by a man of her own class and position. I have volumes of statistics on that subject. We accuse the rich of plucking the flower of innocence among the girls of the people. This is not correct. The rich pay for what they want. They may gather some, but never for the first time.'

" Then, turning to my companion, I began to laugh.

" ' You know that I am aware of your history. The boating-man was not the first.'

" ' Oh, yes, my dear; I swear it.'

" ' You are lying, my dear.'

" ' Oh, no, I assure you.'

" ' You are lying. Come, tell me all.'

" She seemed to hesitate in astonishment.

" ' I am a sorcerer, my dear girl,' I continued; ' I am a clairvoyant. If you do not tell me the truth, I will go off to sleep and then I can find out.'

" She was afraid, being as stupid as all her kind. She faltered:

" ' How did you guess? '

" ' Come, go on telling me,' I said.

" ' Oh, the first time didn't amount to anything. There was a festival in the country. They had sent for a special chef, Monsieur Alexandre. As soon as he came he did just as he pleased in the house. He commanded every one, even the proprietor and his wife, as if he had been a king. He was a big, handsome man, who did not seem fitted to stand beside

a kitchen range. He was always calling out: "Come, some butter—some eggs—some madeira!" And it had to be brought to him at once in a hurry, or he would get cross and say things that would make you blush all over.

"'When the day was over he would smoke a pipe outside the door. And as I was passing by him with a pile of plates he said to me, like that: "Come, girlie, come down to the water with me and show me the country." I went with him like a fool, and we had hardly got down to the bank of the river when he took advantage of me so suddenly that I did not even know what he was doing. And then he went away on the nine o'clock train. I never saw him again.'

"'Is that all?' I asked.

"She hesitated:

"'Oh, I think Florentin belongs to him.'

"'Who is Florentin?'

"'My little boy.'

"'Oh! Well, then, you made the boating-man believe that he was Florentin's father, did you not?'

"'You bet!'

"'Did he have any money, this boating-man?'

"'Yes, he left me an income of three hundred francs settled on Florentin.'

"I was beginning to be amused, and resumed:

"'All right, my girl, all right. You are all less stupid than one would imagine, all the same. And how old is he now, Florentin?'

"'He is now twelve," she replied. 'He will make his first communion in the spring.'

"'That is splendid! And since then you have carried on your business conscientiously.'

" She sighed in a resigned manner.

" ' I must do what I can.'

" But a loud noise coming just then from somewhere in that very room made me jump out of bed at one bound. It sounded like some one falling and picking himself up again by feeling along the wall with his hands.

" I had seized the candle and was looking about me, terrified and furious. She had risen also and was trying to hold me back, to stop me, murmuring:

" ' That's nothing, my dear, I assure you it's nothing.'

" But I had discovered what direction the strange noise came from. I walked straight toward a door hidden at the head of the bed, opened it abruptly, and saw before me, trembling, his bright, terrified eyes opened wide at sight of me, a little pale, thin boy seated beside a large wicker chair off which he had fallen.

" As soon as he saw me he began to cry, and stretching out his arms to his mother, he cried:

" ' It was not my fault, mamma, it was not my fault. I was asleep and I fell off. Do not scold me, it was not my fault.'

" I turned to the woman, and said:

" ' What does this mean? '

" She seemed confused and worried, and replied in a broken voice:

" ' What do you want me to do? I do not earn enough to put him to school! I have to keep him with me, and I cannot afford to pay for another room, by heavens! He sleeps with me when I am alone. If any one comes for an hour or two he can stay in the wardrobe; he keeps quiet; he understands it. But when people stay all night, as you

have done, it tires the poor child to sleep on a chair. It is not his fault—I should like to see you sleep all night on a chair—you would have something to say.'

"She was getting angry and excited, and was talking loud.

"The child was still crying. A poor, delicate, timid little fellow, a veritable child of the wardrobe, of the cold, dark wardrobe, a child who from time to time was allowed to get a little warmth in the bed if it chanced to be unoccupied.

"I also felt inclined to cry.

"And I went home to my own bed."

THE HOME-COMING

THE short, choppy waves of the sea beat against the shore. Little white clouds, like birds, chase quickly through the vast blue sky, blown along by the wind; and the village, nestling in the little dell which extends to the ocean, is basking in the sun.

At the entrance, the house of the Martin-Levesques stands alone at the edge of the road. It is a little fisherman's dwelling, with clay walls and a thatched roof, on which blue iris is growing. Before the door there is a garden, as large as a handkerchief, where onions, cabbages, parsley, and chervil is growing. A hedge separates it from the sandy, winding road.

The man is away fishing, and the woman is standing before the hut, mending a large brown net, which is stretched over the wall like an immense

spider's web. A young girl about fourteen years old is seated in a chair, tilted back against the wall, and is mending clothes which are already full of patches and show signs of frequent darning. Another girl, about a year younger, is slowly rocking in her arms an infant which cannot speak nor walk; and two young shavers, about two or three years old, squatting on the ground face to face, are enjoying the amusing pastime of throwing handfuls of dust in each other's faces.

All are silent, except the little one, whom they are trying to put to sleep, and who is crying continuously in his shrill little voice. A cat is sleeping in the window; and at the foot of the wall some white flowers are growing, forming a little mound around which a multitude of flies are buzzing.

The young girl who is sewing near the door suddenly calls:

"Mother!"

"What's the matter?" the mother answers.

"There he is again."

They have been worried all day, because, since morning, a man has been prowling around the house: he is an old man, who looks like a beggar. They noticed him as they were going down to see the father off. He was seated at the edge of the ditch opposite their house. Then, on their way home from the beach, they found him still there, watching the house.

He looked sick and very miserable. He did not move for more than an hour; then, seeing that they looked at him with suspicion, he had risen and limped away.

Soon they saw him come back again with his slow, tired walk; and once more he had sat down,

a little farther away this time, as though to watch them.

The mother and the girls were afraid, the mother especially, because she was naturally timid and because her husband, Levesque, was not expected home before nightfall.

Her husband's name was Levesque, she was called Martin, and so they had been christened the Martin-Levesques. This is the reason: her first husband had been a sailor by the name of Martin, who went, every summer, to Newfoundland for cod.

After two years of married life she bore him a little girl, and she was expecting another addition to the family when the vessel carrying her husband, the *Two Sisters,* a three-master from Dieppe, disappeared.

Nothing was ever heard from her again; none of the sailors ever returned, and the boat was, therefore, considered lost with all hands.

The Martin woman waited for ten years for her husband, bringing up her two children with great difficulty; then, as she was very worthy and a good woman, a fisherman of the neighborhood, Levesque, a widower with one son, asked her to marry him. They were married, and she had two more children by him in three years.

They existed painfully and with great difficulty. Bread was expensive and the meat almost unknown in the house. Sometimes, during the hard winter months, they would get in debt with the baker. The little ones, however, were healthy. It was said in the neighborhood:

"The Martin-Levesques are good people. The Martin woman is a hard worker, and Levesque has no peer as a fisherman."

Presently the girl continued:

"He looks as if he knew us. Perhaps he is one of the poor men from Epreville or from Auzebose."

But the mother could not be deceived. That man was certainly not from the neighborhood!

As he was as motionless as a stick and as he kept staring obstinately at the hut of the Martin-Levesques, the woman became furious and, fear giving her courage, she seized a shovel and started for the road.

"What are you doing there?" she cried to the tramp.

He answered in a husky voice:

"Getting some fresh air! Is that hurting you any?"

She continued:

"What are you spying on my house for?"

The man answered:

"I'm not bothering anybody. Any rules around here against sitting by the road?"

Finding nothing to answer, she went back again.

The day went by slowly. Toward noon the man disappeared. He passed by again around five o'clock. He was not seen again throughout the evening.

Levesque returned at nightfall. He was told about the affair. He concluded:

"He must be some kind of scamp."

He went to bed without uneasiness, whereas his wife kept thinking about this prowler who had looked at her with such queer eyes.

When daylight came, the wind was howling, and the sailor, seeing that he could not go to sea, helped his wife mend the nets.

About nine o'clock, the eldest girl, one of the

Martins, who had been out to fetch some bread, returned, running wildly and crying:

"Mamma, he's there again!"

The mother turned pale and said to her husband:

"Go speak to him, Levesque, and tell him not to watch us that way, because it gives me the shivers."

Levesque, a big, tanned sailor, with a bushy red beard, a piercing blue eye, a thick neck always wrapped up in woolen, as a protection against the wind and rain on the seas, slowly went out and walked over to the prowler.

They began to talk.

The mother and the children were watching them from the distance, anxious and trembling.

Suddenly the stranger arose and began to walk toward the house with Levesque.

The Martin woman, frightened, started to back away. Her husband said to her:

"Give him a little bread and a glass of cider. He hasn't eaten since the day before yesterday."

The two men entered the house followed by the woman and the children. The prowler sat down and began to eat, hanging his head under the curious glances.

The mother, standing up, was staring him out of countenance; the two tall Martin girls, leaning against the door, one of them carrying the last child, had fixed on him their hungry eyes, and the two youngsters, sitting in the ashes of the chimney, had stopped playing with the black kettle, as though also to observe this stranger.

Levesque, taking a chair, asked him:

"Then you come from a distance?"

"From Cette."

"On foot?"

"Yes. When there's no other way, you've got to."

"Where are you going?"

"Here."

"Do you know anybody?"

"Maybe."

They were silent. Although famished, he ate slowly, and he would take a swallow of cider after each mouthful of bread. He had a tired face with hollowed cheeks and full of wrinkles; he seemed to have suffered much.

Levesque asked him suddenly:

"What's your name?"

He answered without moving:

"Martin!"

A strange trembling seized the mother. She stepped forward, as if to take a closer look at the wanderer, and she stopped in front of him, her arms hanging, her mouth open. Nobody said a word. Finally Levesque continued:

"Are you from this place?"

"Yes," he answered.

And when he finally lifted his head his eyes met those of the woman, and they remained fixed, as if their glances had been fastened to each other.

Suddenly, in a changed, low, trembling voice, she asked:

"Are you my man?"

He answered slowly:

"I am."

He did not move, but continued chewing his bread.

Levesque, more surprised than moved, stammered:

"Is that you, Martin?"

The other simply said:

"Yes."

The second husband asked:

"Where do you come from?"

The first one related:

"From the coast of Africa. We were wrecked on a sand-bar. Three of us escaped, Picard, Vatinel, and me. Then I was taken by savages who held us for twelve years. An English traveler, who was passing by, took me and brought me to Cette. Here I am."

Her face hidden in her apron, the Martin woman was crying.

Levesque asked:

"What am I going to do now?"

Martin asked:

"Are you her man?"

Levesque answered:

"Yes!"

They looked at each other and were silent.

Then Martin, looking at the children around him, nodded toward the two girls and asked:

"Are those mine?"

Levesque said:

"Those are yours."

He didn't rise, he did not kiss them, he merely said:

"Pretty big, aren't they!"

Levesque repeated:

"What am I going to do?"

Martin, perplexed, hardly knew what to say. At last he decided:

"I'll do what you want. I don't want to do you any harm. It's annoying, on account of the house. I've got two children, you've got three, each takes

his own. But the mother, is she yours or is she mine? I'm agreeable to anything you want; but the house is mine, because my father left it to me; I was born here, and I have papers for it at the lawyer's."

The Martin woman was still sobbing, her face hidden in her blue apron. The two girls had come nearer and were anxiously watching their father.

He had finished eating. He in turn said:

"What am I going to do?"

Levesque had a happy thought:

"Let's go see the priest, he'll decide for us."

Martin arose, and as he passed in front of his wife, she threw her arms around him, sobbing:

"My man! There you are! Martin, my poor Martin, there you are!"

She held him fast in both her arms, swept by the memory of days gone by, by thoughts which reminded her of her youth and of her first embraces.

Martin, moved himself, was kissing her. The two children in the fireplace began to howl when they heard their mother cry, and the last-born, which had been resting in the arms of the younger Martin girl, began to squall in a shrill voice, like a fife which is out of tune.

Levesque was standing, waiting:

"Come on, we'll have to get this arranged."

Martin released his wife and, as he was looking at his two daughters, their mother told them:

"You might at least kiss your father."

They came forward together, their eyes dry, surprised, a little timid. He kissed one after the other, on both cheeks, with a good whole-hearted farmer's kiss. On seeing this stranger, the infant began to shriek until it almost went into convulsions.

The two men went out together.

As they were passing before the Commercial Café, Levesque said:

"Let's have a drink!"

"All right," said Martin.

They entered, and sat down in the large room, which at this time was still empty.

"Hey! Chicot, two of your best brandies! This is Martin, who has come back, my wife's Martin, you know, Martin of the *Two Sisters,* which was lost."

And the inn-keeper, three glasses in one hand and a bottle in the other, fat and full-blooded, came up and asked quietly:

"Hullo! Is that you, Martin?"

Martin answered:

"Yes!"

ROOM NUMBER ELEVEN

"WHAT! You do not know why President Amandon was removed?"

"No, not at all."

"As far as he is concerned, it never would have been known. But it is a story of the strangest sort."

"Relate it to me."

"You remember Madame Amandon, that pretty brunette, thin, and so distinguished and pretty that she was called Madame Marguerite in all Perthuis-le-Long?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Very well, then. You recall also how much she was respected and considered, and better loved than any one in town; she knew how to receive, how to organize a festival or a charity fair, how to find money for the poor, and how to please the young people in a thousand ways.

"She was very elegant and very coquettish, nevertheless, but in a platonic fashion, and

with the charming elegance of the provinces, for she was a provincial, this pretty little woman, an exquisite provincial.

" The poets and writers, who are all Parisian, sing to us of the Parisian woman and of her charm, because they know only her; but I declare here that the provincial woman is worth a hundred times more when she is of superior quality.

" The provincial woman has a charm all her own; she is more discreet than the Parisian, more humble, promising nothing and giving much; while the Parisian, for the most part, promises much and gives nothing but *déshabille.*

" The Parisian is a triumph in the elegant effrontery of falseness; the provincial, an example of the modesty of truth.

" Yet the provincial, with her air of simple alertness, her misleading, schoolgirl candor, her smile, which means nothing, and her discreet little passions, direct and tenacious, is capable of a thousand times more deceit, artifice, and feminine invention than all the Parisians together, for gratifying her own tastes or vices; and that without awakening suspicion, or scandal, or gossip in her little town, which watches her with all its eyes from all its windows.

" Madame Amandon was a type of this rare race, but charming. Never had any one suspected her, never had any one thought that her life was not as limpid as her look, a sly look, transparent and warm, but seemingly so honest—you should have seen it!

" Then she had admirable tact, a marvelous ingenuity and power of invention, and apparently an incredible simplicity.

" She chose all her lovers from the army and kept them three years, the time of their sojourn in the garrison. In short, she not only had love, she had sense.

" When some new regiment arrived at Perthuis-le-Long, she observed carefully all the officers between thirty and forty years of age—for before thirty one is not discreet, and after forty one is often feeble.

" Oh, she knew the list of officers as well as the colonel. She knew all, all the habits, manners, instruction, education, physical qualities, the power of resistance to fatigue, the character, whether patient or violent, the fortune, and the tendency to closeness or prodigality of each of them. Then she made her choice. She gave her preference to men of calm allurement, like herself, but they must be handsome. She also wished them to have had no previous entanglements, no passion having the power to leave traces, or that had made any trouble. Because the man whose loves are talked about is never a very discreet man.

" After deciding upon the one she would love for the three years of his regular sojourn, it only remained to throw down the gauntlet.

" While some women would find themselves embarrassed, would have taken ordinary means, following the way of others, having court paid them in understood stages of conquest and resistance—allowing the fingers to be kissed one day, the wrist the next, the cheek the following, then the lips, then the rest—she had a method more prompt, more discreet, and more sure. She gave a ball.

" The chosen officer was invited to dance with the mistress of the house. Then, in waltzing, led on

by the rapid movement, bewildered by the intoxication of the dance, she would throw herself against him as if giving herself, and hold his hand with a nervous, continued pressure.

" If he did not comprehend, he was only a fool, and she passed on to the next, classed as number two on the list of her choice.

" If he comprehended, the thing was done, without fuss, without compromising gallantries, without numerous visits.

" What could be more simple or more practical?

" How often women might make use of a process similar to this to make us understand their wishes! How effectively it would suppress difficulties, hesitations, and trouble from misunderstandings! How often we pass by, without knowing it, a possible happiness—without suspecting it, because we are unable to penetrate the mystery of thought, the secret abandon of the will, the mute appeal, the unknown soul of a woman whose mouth preserves silence, whose eye is impenetrable and clear!

" When the chosen one comprehended, he asked for a rendezvous. But she always made him wait a month or six weeks in order to observe him, to be sure that he had no dangerous faults.

" During this time he was racking his brain to think of some place where they could meet without peril, and imagining combinations difficult and dangerous.

" Then, at some official feast, she would say to him in a low voice:

" ' Come Tuesday evening, at nine o'clock, to the Golden Horse Hotel near the ramparts, on the Vouzier Road, and ask for Mademoiselle Clarisse.

I shall be waiting for you. And be sure to be in civilian's clothes.'

"For eight years she had in fact rented this furnished room by the year, in this obscure inn. It was an idea of her first lover which she found practical; and after the man departed she kept the nest.

"It was only a mediocre nest; four walls covered with gray paper adorned with blue flowers, a pine bedstead under muslin curtains, an armchair bought at her order by the innkeeper's wife, two chairs, and some necessary articles for the toilet —what more was needed?

"Upon the walls were three large photographs. Three colonels on horseback; the colonels of her lovers! Why not? It would not do to preserve the true likeness, the exact likeness, but she could perhaps keep some souvenirs by proxy.

"And had she never been recognized by any one in all these visits to the Golden Horse, you ask?

"Never, by any one!

"The means she employed were admirable and simple. She planned and organized charity reunions and religious meetings, some of which she attended, others she did not. Her husband, knowing her good works, which cost him dear, lived without suspicions. Then, when a rendezvous had been agreed upon, she would say at dinner, before the servants:

"'I am going this evening to the association for making flannel bandages for old paralytics.'

"She went out about eight o'clock, straight to the association, left it very soon, passed through divers streets, and, finding herself alone in some little street, in some somber corner without a light,

she would take off her hat, replace it by a maid's cap which she carried under her mantle, fold a kerchief after the same fashion and tie it over her shoulders, carrying her hat and the garment she had worn in a napkin; she would go trotting along, full of courage, like a good little maid that had been sent upon some errand; and sometimes she would even run, as if she were in a great hurry.

" Who could have recognized in this trim servant the lively wife of President Amandon?

" She would arrive at the Golden Horse, go up to her room, of which she had the key, and the big proprietor, Maître Trouveau, seeing her pass the desk, would murmur:

" ' There is Mademoiselle Clarisse coming to meet some lover.'

" He had indeed guessed something, the rogue, but did not try to learn more, and he would certainly have been much surprised to find that his client was Madame Amandon, or ' Madame Marguerite,' as she was called in Perthuis-le-Long. And this is how the horrible discovery took place.

" Never had Mademoiselle Clarisse come to her rendezvous two evenings in succession, never! being too nice and too prudent for that. Maître Trouveau knew this well, since not once in eight years had he seen her come the next day after a visit. Often, therefore, in days of need, he had rented her room for a night.

" Now, some time last summer Monsieur Amandon, the trustful president, absented himself from home for a week. It was in July. Madame was ardently in love, and as there was no fear of being surprised, she asked her lover, the handsome Commander Varangelles, one Tuesday evening on

leaving him whether he wished to return the next day.

" He replied: ' With all my heart! '

" So it was agreed that they should return at the usual hour on Wednesday. She said to him in a low tone:

" ' If you arrive first, my dear, you can wait for me in bed.'

" Then they embraced and separated. The next day, as Maître Trouveau sat reading the *Perthuis Tablet,* the Republican organ of the town, he cried out to his wife, who was plucking a fowl in the courtyard:

" ' Here! the cholera has broken out in the country. A man died yesterday of it in Vauvigny.' But he thought no more about it, his inn being full of people, and business very good.

" Toward noon a traveler presented himself on foot, a kind of tourist, who ordered a good luncheon, after drinking two absinthes; and, as he was very warm, he drank a bottle of wine and two bottles of water at least. Then he took his coffee and his pony of liqueur, or, rather, his three ponies; and, feeling a little heavy, he asked for a room where he might sleep for an hour or two. There was no longer a vacant room, and the proprietor, after consulting his wife, gave him Mademoiselle Clarisse's.

" The man went in there, and, toward five o'clock, as he had not been seen to come out, the landlord went to wake him. What was his astonishment to find him dead!

" The innkeeper descended to find his wife: ' See here,' he whispered to her, ' I believe the tourist I put in Number Eleven is dead.'

"She raised her arms, crying: 'It's not possible! Good Lord! It is the cholera!'

"Maître Trouveau shook his head:

"'I should sooner believe that it was cerebral congestion, seeing that he is as black as the dregs of wine.'

"But the mistress was frightened and kept repeating:

"'Undoubtedly, undoubtedly it is the cholera. Go and make the report and say nothing. They will take him away in the night, and no one will know about it. What is neither seen nor heard troubles nobody.'

"The man murmured: 'Mademoiselle Clarisse was here yesterday; the room will be free this evening.'

"He found the doctor, who made out the certificate: 'Died from congestion after a copious repast.' Then he made an agreement with the commissioner of police to remove the body toward midnight, that there might be no suspicion about the hotel.

"It was scarcely nine o'clock when Madame Amandon went secretly up the staircase of the Golden Horse, without being seen by any one. She reached her room, opened the door and entered. A candle was burning upon the chimneypiece. She turned toward the bed. The Commander, she thought, was already there and had closed the curtains.

"She said to him: 'One minute, dearie, and I will be there.'

"And she disrobed with a feverish haste, throwing her shoes upon the floor and her corsets upon an armchair. Then, her black gown and skirts

having fallen in a circle around her, she stood in her red chemise like a flower that is ready to blossom.

"As the Commander said not a word, she asked:

"'Are you asleep, honey?'

"He did not answer, and she began to laugh, murmuring:

"'Wait! He is asleep. It is too funny!'

"She kept on her black silk stockings and, running to the bed, glided in quickly, seizing him full in the arms and kissing him on the lips, in order to wake him suddenly. She clasped the cold, dead body of the traveler.

"For one second she remained immovable, too frightened to comprehend anything. But the cold of the inert flesh penetrated her own, giving her a fright before her mind had time to reflect.

"She bounded out of bed, trembling from head to foot; then, running to the chimneypiece, she seized the candle, returned and looked! And she perceived a frightful visage that she had never before seen, black, swollen, with closed eyes and a horrible grimace of the jaw.

"She uttered a cry, one of those piercing, interminable cries that women utter in fright, and, letting fall the candle, she opened the door and fled, unclothed, down the passage, continuing to scream in a frightful fashion. A commercial traveler, in his socks, who occupied room Number Four, came out immediately and received her in his arms.

"He asked, much startled: 'What is the matter, pretty child?'

"She stammered out, terrified: 'Some one has been killed—in—my room!'

" Other guests appeared. The landlord himself ran out.

" And suddenly the Commander showed his tall figure at the end of the corridor. When she saw him, she threw herself toward him, crying:

" ' Save me, save me, Gontran! Some one has been killed in our room! '

" Explanations were difficult. Maître Trouveau, however, told the truth and demanded that the authorities release Mademoiselle Clarisse, for whom he vouched with his own head. But the commercial traveler in socks, having examined the dead body, declared that a crime had been committed, and he convinced the other strangers that Mademoiselle Clarisse and her lover should not be allowed to depart.

" They were obliged to wait the arrival of the police commissioner, who gave them their liberty, but was not discreet.

" The following month President Amandon received promotion, with a new place of residence."

YVELINE SAMORIS

THE Countess Samoris——"

"That woman in black, over there?"

"That very one. She is in mourning for her daughter, whom she killed."

"What! Tell me about it."

"It is a simple story without any crying or violence in it."

"What is there about it, then?"

"Almost nothing. Some women are born virtuous and some are not, is that not so? Well, Madame Samoris, born in the latter class, had a daughter born in the former, that's all."

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand you, my friend."

"I will try to make myself clear.

"The Countess Samoris is one of those loud foreigners who rain down on Paris by the hundreds every year. A Hungarian, or some other kind of

countess, she appeared one winter in apartments on the Champs-Elysées, that stamping-ground for adventurers, and opened her parlors to the first coming and the first come.

"I went there. You ask me why. Who knows? I went as we all go, because there is gambling, because the women are pleasant and the men uncivil. You know that world of social filibusters with manifold decorations, all of them noblemen, all titled, all unknown to the embassies, except to the spies. All of them boast of their honor and of their ancestors, braggarts, liars, crooks, as dangerous as their courage, as deceitful as their names; in short, the aristocracy of the gallows.

"I like that kind of people. They are interesting to know and observe, amusing to listen to, often witty, never commonplace like public officials. Their wives are always pretty, with a little flavor of foreign roguishness, suggestive of the mystery of their lives, perhaps half spent in some house of correction. They usually have wonderful eyes and improbable hair. I love them, too.

"Madame Samoris is typical of these adventuresses, elegant, ripe, but still beautiful, charming and cat-like, vicious all the way through. All kinds of pleasures could be found at her house, gambling, dancing, eating, drinking; everything, in short, that goes to make the pleasures of a fast life.

"She had a daughter, tall and stately, always happy, always ready for fun, always laughing wholeheartedly, and dancing wonderfully; a typical adventuress's daughter. And yet she was perfectly innocent, ignorant, simple, seeing nothing, knowing nothing, understanding nothing, guessing at nothing that happened in her home."

"How do you know all this?"

"How do I know it? That is the oddest part of it all. One morning I heard the bell ring, and my valet informed me that Monsieur Joseph Bonent wished to see me.

"'Who is this gentleman?' I asked.

"'I don't know, Monsieur; it is perhaps a servant,' my man answered.

"It happened, indeed, to be a servant who wished to enter my household.

"'Whom are you leaving?' I inquired.

"'Madame la Comtesse Samoris.'

"'But my house is not at all like hers.'

"'I know it, Monsieur, and that is why I wish to enter your service. That kind of people is very well for a while, not for any length of time.'

"I just happened to be in need of a man, and so I took him.

"A month later Mademoiselle Yveline Samoris died mysteriously. Here are the details of this death as they were told me by Joseph, who had obtained them from his friend, Madame Samoris's maid.

"One evening, during a ball, two new arrivals were talking behind a door. Mademoiselle Yveline, who had just finished a dance, was leaning against this door in order to get a little fresh air. They did not see her approach; she heard them. They were saying:

"'But who is the father of this young person?'

"'Some Russian, a Count Rouvaloff. He never sees the mother any more.'

"'Who is the reigning favorite to-day?'

"'That English prince, over there against the window; Madame Samoris adores him. But her

adorations never last longer than a month or six weeks. You can notice that her staff of friends is numerous; all are called—and almost all are chosen. It may be a little expensive; but—pooh!'

"'Where did she ever get this name of Samoris?'

"'From the only man, perhaps, whom she ever loved, a Jewish banker in Berlin, whose name was Samuel Morris.'

"'Good! Thank you. Now I am informed, I see my way, and I shall go straight.'

"What a storm raged in the mind of this young girl, endowed with all the instincts of a virtuous woman! What despair must have upset that simple soul! What tortures must have extinguished that incessant joy, that charming laugh, that exulting pleasure in life! What a fight must have been waged in that tender heart until the last of the guests left!

"That same evening Yveline entered her mother's room quickly, sending out the maid, who remained behind the door. Pale and trembling, her eyes flashing, she said:

"'Mother, here is what I just heard in the parlor.'

"And she related word for word the conversation I have just given you.

"At first, the Countess, dumfounded, did not know what to answer. Then she energetically denied the whole thing, invented a story, swore to it, took God as witness.

"The young girl left in despair, but not convinced. Then she spied upon her mother's actions.

"I remember perfectly the strange things she underwent. She was always solemn and sad, and

she would fasten her large eyes on us as if trying to read into the bottom of our souls. We did not know what to think, and it was said that she was looking for a husband, either temporary or permanent.

" One evening she no longer had any doubt; she surprised her mother. Then coldly, like a business man giving the conditions of a contract, she said:

" ' Mother, here is what I have decided. We shall both retire either to the country or to some small town; we shall live there quietly, as best we can. Your jewels alone are worth a fortune. If you can find some good man to marry you, so much the better; better still if I can marry also. If you do not agree to this I shall kill myself.'

" This time the Countess sent her daughter to bed, and forbade her ever mentioning this subject again.

" Yveline answered:

" ' I give you a month in which to think it over. If, in that time, you have not changed your mode of life, I shall kill myself, since there is no other honorable issue to my life.'

" She left the room.

" A month later they were still gambling, dancing, and drinking in the Samoris parlors.

" Yveline then pretended that she had a toothache and sent out to the chemist for chloroform. The next day the same thing happened; each time that she went out she must have brought back insignificant doses of the anæsthetic. She filled a bottle with it.

" One morning she was found cold and stark in her bed, with a mask of cotton over her face.

" Her coffin was covered with flowers, the church

draped in white. The funeral services were attended by a crowd.

"Well! if I had known—but one never can tell—I might perhaps have married that girl myself. She certainly was beautiful."

"And what became of the mother?"

"Oh! she wept a great deal. She began receiving her intimate friends a week ago."

"And how did they explain this death?"

"They spoke of a patent stove which had not worked. Accidents from these things have made quite a sensation, and there was nothing improbable about it."

PROFITABLE BUSINESS

HE did not think himself a saint, nor did he make any hypocritical pretensions to virtue, but, nevertheless, he thought as highly of himself as he did of any one else, and perhaps even a trifle more highly, and this without any more self-love than was necessary, and without having to accuse himself of being self-righteous. He did himself justice, that was all, for he had good moral principles, and applied them, if the truth must be told, not only in judging the conduct of others, but also in a measure in regulating his own conduct, as he would have been much annoyed if he could not have said of himself:

"On the whole, I am what people call a perfectly honorable man."

Luckily, he had never (oh! never) been obliged to doubt that excellent opinion of himself, which he

liked to express thus, in his moments of rhetorical expansion:

"My whole life gives me the right to shake hands with myself."

A subtle psychologist would possibly have found some flaws in this armor of integrity, which was sanctimoniously satisfied with itself. It was, for instance, quite certain that our friend had no scruples about making profit out of the vices or misfortunes of his neighbors, provided that, in his own opinion, he was not solely or chiefly responsible for them. But, on the whole, it was only one manner of looking at it, nothing more, and there was plenty of material for casuistic arguments in it. This kind of discussion is particularly unpleasant to such simple natures as that of this worthy fellow, who would have replied to the psychologist:

"Why go on a wild-goose chase? As for me, I am perfectly sincere."

You must not, however, believe that this perfect sincerity prevented him from having elevated views. He prided himself on having a weakness for imagination and the occult, and if he would have been offended at being called a dishonorable man, he would, perhaps, have been still more hurt if anybody had attributed middle-class tastes to him.

Accordingly, in love affairs, he expressed a most virtuous horror of adultery, for if he had committed it, he could not have borne that testimony to himself which was so sweet to his conscience:

"Ah! As for me, I can declare that I never wronged anybody!"

Yet, on the other hand, he was not satisfied with pleasure which was paid for by the hour, and which debases the noblest desires of the heart to the vul-

gar satisfaction of a physical requirement. What he required, so he used to say, while lifting his eyes up to heaven, was:

"Something rather more ideal than that!"

That search after the ideal did not, indeed, cost him any great effort, as it was limited to not going to notorious houses, and not accosting the nymphs of the boulevards with the simple words: "How much?"

It consisted chiefly in wishing to be gallant even with such women, and in trying to persuade himself that they liked him for his own sake, and in preferring those whose manner, dress, and looks allowed room for suppositions and romantic illusions, such as:

"She might be taken for a little work-girl who has not yet lost her virtue."

"No, I rather think she is a widow who has met with misfortunes."

"What if she be a fashionable lady in disguise!"

And other nonsense, which he knew to be such, even while imagining it, but whose imaginary flavor was very pleasant to him, all the same.

With such tastes, it was only natural that this pilgrim followed women into the large shops, and wherever there was a crowd, and that he especially looked out for ladies of easy virtue, for nothing is more exciting than those half-closed shutters, behind which a face is indistinctly seen, and from which one hears a furtive: *"Pst! Pst!"*

He would say to himself: "Who is she? Is she young and pretty? Is she some old woman who is terribly skilful at her business, but who yet does not venture to show herself any longer? Or is she some

beginner who has not yet acquired the boldness of an old hand? In any case, it is the unknown, perhaps, that is my ideal during the time it takes me to find my way upstairs;" and always as he went up his heart beat, as it does at a first meeting with a beloved mistress.

But he had never felt such a delicious shiver as he felt on the day on which he penetrated into that old house in the blind alley in Ménilmontant. He could not have said why, for he had often gone after so-called love in much stranger places; but now, without any reason, he had a presentiment that he was about to meet with an adventure, and that gave him a delightful sensation.

The woman who had beckoned to him lived on the third floor, and all the way upstairs his excitement increased, until his heart was beating violently when he reached the landing. At the same time that he was going up, he smelled a peculiar odor, which grew stronger and stronger, and which he had tried in vain to analyze, though all he could arrive at was that it smelled like a chemist's shop.

The door on the right, at the end of the passage, was opened as soon as he put his foot on the landing, and the woman said, in a low voice:

"Come in, my dear."

A whiff of some powerful odor met his nostrils through the open door, and suddenly he exclaimed:

"How stupid I was! I know what it is now; it is carbolic acid, is it not?"

"Yes," the woman replied. "Don't you like it, dear? It is very wholesome, you know."

The woman was not ugly, although not young; she had very good eyes, although they were sad and sunken in her head; evidently she had been crying

a great deal quite recently, and that imparted a special spice to the vague smile which she put on, so as to appear more amiable.

Full of his romantic ideas, and under the influence of the presentiment which he had had just before, he thought—and the idea filled him with pleasure:

"She is some widow whom poverty has forced to sell herself."

The room was small, but very clean and tidy, and that confirmed him in his conjecture, and as he was curious to verify its truth, he went into the three rooms which opened into one another. The bedroom came first; next came a kind of drawing-room, and then a dining-room, which evidently served as a kitchen, for a Dutch tiled stove stood in the middle of it, on which a stew was simmering; but the smell of carbolic acid was even stronger in that room. He remarked on it, and added with a laugh:

"Do you put it in your soup?"

And as he said this, he laid hold of the handle of the door leading into the next room, for he wanted to see everything, even that nook, which was apparently a store-closet, but the woman seized him by the arm, and pulled him violently back.

"No, no," she said, almost in a whisper and in a hoarse and suppliant voice; "no, dear, not there, not there; you must not go in there."

"Why?" he said, for his wish to go in had only become stronger.

"Because if you go in there you will have no inclination to remain with me, and I do so want you to stay. If you only knew!"

"Well, what?" And with a violent movement he opened the glazed door, when the smell of car-

bolic acid seemed almost to strike him in the face, but what he saw made him recoil still more, for on a small iron bedstead lay the dead body of a woman fantastically illuminated by a single wax candle, and in horror he turned to make his escape.

"Stop, my dear," the woman sobbed; and clinging to him, she told him, amid a flood of tears, that her friend had died two days previously, and that there was no money to bury her. "Because," she said, "you can understand that I want it to be a respectable funeral, we were so very fond of each other! Stop here, my dear, do stop. I only want ten francs more. Don't go away."

They had gone back into the bedroom.

"No," he said, "let me go. I will give you the ten francs, but I will not stay here; I cannot."

He took his purse out of his pocket, and taking out a ten-franc piece, put it on the table, and then went to the door; but when he reached it, a thought suddenly struck him, as if somebody were reasoning with him without his knowledge.

"Why lose these ten francs? Why not profit by this woman's good intentions? She certainly did her business bravely, and if I had not known about the matter, I should certainly not have gone away for some time. . . . Well, then?"

But other obscurer suggestions whispered to him:

"She was her friend! . . . They were so fond of each other! Was it friendship or love? Oh! love, apparently. Well, it would surely be avenging morality, if this woman were forced to be faithless to that strange love." And suddenly the man turned round and said in a low and trembling voice: "Look here! If I give you twenty francs instead

of ten, I suppose you could buy some flowers for her, as well? ''

The unhappy woman's face brightened with pleasure and gratitude.

'' Will you really give me twenty? ''

'' Yes,'' he replied, '' and more, perhaps. It quite depends upon yourself.''

And, with the quiet conscience of an honorable man who at the same time is not a fool, he said gravely:

''You need only be very complaisant.''

And he added mentally: '' Especially as I deserve it, for in giving you twenty francs I am performing a good action.''

THE BANDMASTER'S SISTER

"THAT would be a joke!" said the bandmaster, twirling his mustache, and smiling inanely like a good-looking man who considers himself a lady-killer.

His comrades' equivocal allusions puzzled, though they flattered him like applause, and he stealthily looked in the large mirrors at the new lyres embroidered in gold on the collar of his tunic. Their sheen fascinated him, and half intoxicated by the doubtful champagne that he had drunk during dinner, and by the glasses of chartreuse and of Bavarian beer which he had imbibed afterward, and excited by the singing, he was indulging in his usual dreams of success.

He saw himself on the platform of some public gardens, standing before his musicians in a flood of light, and he fancied already that he could hear

the whispers of women, and feel the caress of their looks upon him.

He would be invited even into the drawing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, which was so difficult of access. With his handsome, pale face and his wonderful manner of playing Chopin's music, he would penetrate everywhere, and perhaps some romantic heiress would fall in love with him, and consent to forget that he was only a poor musician, the son of small shopkeepers, who were still in business at Bayeux.

Lieutenant Varache, who was stirring the punch, shrugged his shoulders, and continued in a bantering voice:

"Yes, Monsieur Parisel, they are sure to ask you whether you have just joined the regiment, or whether you have an establishment."

"What do I care for that?"

"But they say that you have, and that the lady's eyes grow so bright when she speaks to you that a man would forfeit three months' pay for a glance of them, by Jove!"

Another traced her likeness in a few words, and described her as if she had been a piece of bric-à-brac for sale at an auction. Her hair grew low on her forehead like a golden net, her skin was dazzlingly white, while her bright eyes threw out glances that were like those flashes of summer lightning which dart across the sky on a calm night in June.

Her slender figure—she did not look very strong—recalled a plant that has grown too rapidly. She was a strange creature, on the whole, who at times looked as if she had come in like a spirit at the door, who buried herself in the shade, hid herself,

and did not surrender either her heart or her body, and left the impression of a statue on the bed in which she slept, who appeared delighted with the ignoble business she carried on, and who allured men, and surpassed the commonest women in boldness.

Parisel, however, was not listening to them any longer.

He was terribly vexed at meeting with such a commonplace adventure at the first start, and to come across that girl on his road, who would make him ridiculous and discredit him with her love. She would lower him, and bring him down to the level of rollicking troopers, who are welcome guests in houses of bad character.

"Well," one of them said suddenly, "suppose we go and finish the night at that establishment; it will be far jollier, and the chief will not be obliged to cudgel his brains to remember the name of the girl he loves!"

* * * * * * *

The officers pushed open the door of the drawing-room, where a servant was lighting the chandelier, and Marchessy called out in a loud voice, and amid bursts of laughter:

"Here, Lucie! We have brought your sweetheart to you!"

She came in first slowly, wrapped in a transparent muslin dressing-gown, and stopped, as if the beating of her heart were choking her. The bandmaster did not move or say a word; he resembled a duelist who sees his adversary advancing toward him and taking aim at him, and who is expecting to be killed.

Great drops of perspiration rolled down his face, and all the blood had left it, while the woman looked at him, and did not appear to recognize him, although her eyes wore a look of triumphant pleasure, and when he started back, and turned his head away, she said to him, in a mocking voice:

"What, my dear, are you not going to kiss me, after a whole year? . . . I must have altered very much, very much indeed. Do not my mouth, and this mark by the side of my ear, bring something to your mind?"

Varache, who had just lighted a cigar, muttered: "Are they going to act a play until to-morrow?"

Then Lucie threw herself on a sofa, and with her chin in her hands, and in the posture of a chimera on the lookout for the pleasure she wishes, she continued gravely:

"We lived at the end of a quiet street behind the cathedral, a street in which pots of carnations stood on the window ledges, through which the seminarists went twice a day, as if it had been a procession, and where I was bored to death. Our parents' shop was cold and dark; my mother thought of nothing but of going to all the services, and of attending the *novenas,* while my father bent over the counter. There was nobody to pet me, to advise me, or to teach me what life really was, and besides that, I had the instinctive feeling that they cared for nobody in this world but my brother.

"The first kiss that touched my lips nearly sent me mad, and I had not the force to resist or to say *no.* I did not even ask the man who betrayed me to marry me, to promise me what men do promise girls. We met in a booth at the fair, and I used to go to meet him every evening in a meadow bor-

dered by poplar trees. He had a situation as clerk or collector, I believe, and when he was sent to another town I had been already three months in a delicate condition. My people soon found it out, and forced me to acknowledge everything, and they locked me up like a prisoner who wished to escape from jail.

" My brother was home for his holidays—do you remember now, Monsieur Parisel? He had just been appointed second head clerk, was reckoning on still further speedy advancement, and was bursting with pride. He was harder and more inexorable than the two old people toward me, poor forsaken girl as I was, although they had never left their home. He spoke about his future, which would be compromised, of the disgrace that would fall on all the family, went into a rage, and pitied neither my tears nor my prayers, and treated me with the cruelty of a hangman.

" They sent me a long way off, like a servant who has committed a theft, and condemned me to be confined at a farm in a village where the peasants treated me harshly. The child died, but the mother lived through everything.

" One does not have good luck very frequently, and the only thing that I could do was to return evil, to strike at the coward whom I hated, to dishonor and to lower his name, to stick to the fellow who strutted about in his uniform, and who had won the game, from garrison to garrison, as if I had been vermin. That is why I came to this house of my own accord, and have become almost more vicious than any of the other girls, and why I have told you this unentertaining story.

" I say, you fellows, who will pay ten francs for

the bandmaster's sister? Upon my honor, you will not regret your money!"

His comrades got Parisel out of the house. He resisted for a week, but then sold everything he had, borrowed the money to pay Lucie's debts, and tried in vain to free himself from that weight, and to get her expelled from the town, but she always returned. She was as implacable toward him as a gerfalcon that is devouring its prey; and as the adventure had got wind, and was even talked about at the soldiers' mess, and as the scandal increased every day, the Colonel forced the bandmaster to resign.

When Lucie heard the news, she looked vexed, and said spitefully:

"I had hoped that he would have blown his brains out!"

BED 29

WHEN Captain Epivent passed down the street all the women turned round to look at him. He was really a true type of a handsome officer of hussars. He was always parading about, showing off, proud of his legs, his figure, and his mustache. They were all very fine, the mustache, the figure, and the legs. The first was blond, very heavy, and it fell in a military curve at both sides of his mouth. His waist was small, as if he wore a corset; and his strong manly chest was full and rounded and swelled out above it. His legs were splendid, the legs of a gymnast, of a dancer, the movement of the firm muscles showing beneath the tight-fitting red breeches.

He walked with his feet thrown out and his arms away from his sides, with a certain swing

peculiar to horsemen, which shows off one's legs and figure and is very fetching in uniform, but looks common in mufti.

Like many officers, Captain Epivent did not look well in civilian's clothes. He looked like a shop-walker in them. But in uniform he was victorious. He had a handsome head, a slender, aquiline nose, blue eyes, and a narrow forehead. He was bald, however, and never could understand why his hair had fallen out. He consoled himself by affirming that with a mustache a bald head does not look bad.

He had a contempt for the world in general, with different degrees of contempt.

The *bourgeois* class for him had no existence. He looked upon them as one regards animals, paying no more attention to them than if they were sparrows or fowls. Army officers alone were worthy of any consideration, but he had not the same regard for all officers. In fact, he respected only handsome men, the one requisite for a soldier being a fine presence. A soldier was a fellow—by Jove!—a big fellow created in order to make war and love, a man of strength, with good hair and legs, nothing more. He classified the generals of the French army according to their figures, their bearing, and the amount of beard on their faces. Bourbaki, in his eyes, was the greatest soldier of modern times.

He ridiculed the artillery officers, who are short and stout and puff when they walk; but his especial dislike, which bordered on repugnance, was for the poor, slight weaklings that graduate from the École Polytechnique, those thin little men with spectacles, clumsy and awkward, who seem about as well suited for a uniform as a rabbit would be to say mass, as

he expressed it. It made him angry to think that they should tolerate in the army these little creatures with slender legs, who walked like crabs, never drank, who ate sparingly and appeared to be more in love with equations than with beautiful girls.

Captain Épivent made frequent conquests among the fair sex. His comrades did not care to introduce him to their sweethearts, and the shopkeepers who had pretty assistants knew him, and feared and hated him.

As he passed along, the wife of the shopkeeper would glance at him in spite of herself, and her husband, catching this exchange of glances as the officer went on his way, smiling and pleased at the effect he produced, would exclaim:

"There goes a great turkey! When shall we give up supporting all these good-for-nothings who trail their tinware along the streets? As for me, I prefer a butcher to a soldier. If he has blood on his apron it is only the blood of an animal. He is of some use, and the knife he carries is not intended to kill men with. I do not understand how these public murderers can be permitted to parade their instruments of death on the streets. They are necessary, I know, but let them remain in concealment and not be dressed like masqueraders in red breeches and blue coats. We do not usually dress up an executioner like a general, do we?"

His wife shrugged her shoulders imperceptibly without replying; while the husband, guessing at her gesture without having seen it, cried:

"How stupid people must be to go to see those peacocks strutting about!"

Captain Épivent's reputation as a lady-killer was well known in the French army also.

In 1868 his regiment, the 102d Hussars, was garrisoned at Rouen. He was soon known in the town. Every evening about five o'clock he might be seen on the Mall Boïeldieu drinking absinthe at the Café de la Comédie, but before he went inside he always took a turn on the promenade to show off his legs, his figure, and his mustache.

The Rouen business men, who were also taking a stroll, their hands behind their backs, preoccupied with business matters and talking of the rise and fall in prices, glanced at him and murmured:

"By Jove, there goes a handsome man!" Then as they recognized him: "Why, it is Captain Épivent! What a scamp he is, all the same!"

The woman on meeting him would make a queer little motion with their heads, a sort of shiver of modesty as if they half feared his wiles. They would look down with a half smile on their lips, with a desire to appear attractive and to win a glance from him. When he was walking with one of his comrades, the latter never failed to murmur with jealous envy every time he saw this performance:

"That chap Épivent, what luck he has!"

The women of the demi-monde all vied with one another to attract his attention. They would come at five o'clock, the hour the officers promenaded on the Mall Boïeldieu, and walk along two and two, trailing their skirts, while the officers in pairs—lieutenants, captains, and colonels—would walk along dragging their swords before going into the café.

One afternoon the handsome Irma, the sweetheart, it was said, of M. Templier-Papon, the rich manufacturer, stopped her carriage in front of the Comédie and got out as if she were about to buy some writing-paper or order some visiting cards at

the shop of M. Paulard's, the engraver, in order to pass by the tables where the officers were sitting, and she cast a meaning glance at Captain Épivent as much as to say: "Whenever you wish!" so that Colonel Prune, who was drinking the green liqueur with his lieutenant-colonel, growled.

"The devil! What luck that fellow has!"

The Colonel's remark was repeated, and Épivent, flattered at the approbation of his superior officer, on the following day walked up and down several times in full uniform past the windows of the lady.

She saw him, appeared at the window, and smiled. From that time they were continually together, and made themselves conspicuous as if they were proud of it.

Nothing was talked of in town but the friendship of the beautiful Irma and the officer. M. Templier-Papon was the only one in ignorance.

Captain Épivent was beaming with pride, and was constantly saying:

"Irma just told me—Irma told me last evening—yesterday, when I was dining with Irma . . ."

For more than a year he paraded this friendship in Rouen, as if it were a flag taken from an enemy. He felt as if he were exalted by this conquest, envied, more confident of the future, more sure of the cross of the Legion of Honor, which he eagerly desired, for every one had his eyes on him, and if one keeps one's self well to the front, he is sure not to be forgotten.

But war was declared, and the Captain's regiment was one of the first to be sent to the front.

His leave-taking of Irma was sad, and seemed as if it never would end. She threw herself on the floor and seemed almost beside herself. The

Captain, much affected, but unused to consoling, said:

"Irma, my little Irma, this is a case of necessity." And he wiped away an occasional tear from the corner of his eye.

He finally left her. She followed her lover in her carriage as far as the first halting-place, and when they had to part she embraced him before the whole regiment. The men all thought it was very pretty, very creditable, and quite proper; and his comrades shook the Captain's hand, saying:

"Lucky dog! she has a heart, that little girl!"

It seemed to them as if there were something patriotic about it.

The regiment saw a great deal of service during the campaign. The Captain behaved like a hero and at length received the cross of the Legion of Honor. When the war was over he went back to garrison at Rouen.

He at once inquired for Irma, but no one could give him any exact information. Some said she had married the Prussian commandant; others, that she had gone to live with her parents who were farmers near Yvetot. He even sent his orderly to the town hall to look up the death register. Her name did not appear in it.

He felt very sad, and made a parade of his grief. He even blamed the enemy for his misfortune, laying at the door of the Prussians the young woman's disappearance and declaring:

"In the next war I will make them pay for it, the scoundrels!"

But one day, as he was going in to mess at noon, a messenger, an old man in a smock, wearing an oilskin cap, handed him an envelope. He read it:

"My Dear: I am in the hospital, very ill, very ill. Will you not come and see me? It would give me so much pleasure!

Irma."

The Captain grew pale, and, stirred with pity, he exclaimed:

"Good God! The poor girl! I will go immediately after breakfast."

And he talked of nothing at the mess table but of Irma being in the hospital. But he would take her out of it, the very next day! That also was the fault of those cursed Prussians! She must have been alone, without money, dying of misery, for, of course, they had stolen all her things.

"Ah, the pigs!"

Every one grew sympathetic as they listened.

As soon as he finished luncheon he rose, and, taking his sword from the coat rack and inflating his chest to make his waist look slim, he buckled on his sword belt and set off at a quick pace for the city hospital.

But he was bluntly refused admittance to the building, which he had hoped to enter at once, and he went to see his Colonel, to whom he explained the matter, and obtained a note from him to the hospital superintendent, who, after letting the handsome captain pose for some time in the waiting-room, finally handed him a permit with a cold and disapproving glance.

As soon as he was inside the door he felt ill at ease in this asylum of wretchedness, of suffering and death. An orderly conducted him to the ward.

He walked on tiptoe, so as to make no noise in the long corridors, in which was a faint odor of mildew, of sickness, and of drugs. An occasional mur-

mur of voices was the only thing that disturbed the silence.

His guide suddenly stopped before a ward full of invalids. On the door in large letters was a sign indicating the nature of their disease. The Captain shuddered, then his face grew red. A nurse was preparing some medicine on a table beside the door of the ward.

"I will take you there," she said. "It is bed twenty-nine." And she walked ahead. She pointed to a bed.

"There it is."

Nothing could be seen but a mound of bedclothes. Even the head of the patient was hidden.

In all directions heads were raised on pillows; pale, astonished faces gazed at the uniform, faces of young women and old women, but all ugly, vulgar, all wearing the hospital garb.

The Captain, greatly distressed, with one hand holding the handle of his sword and the other holding his *képi,* murmured:

"Irma!"

The bedclothes stirred, and the girl's face appeared, but so changed, so weary, so thin, that he did not recognize her.

She breathed hard, almost choking with emotion, and said:

"Albert! . . . Albert! . . . Is it you! . . . Oh! . . . that is good . . . that is good!" And tears streamed from her eyes.

The nurse brought a chair, saying:

"Be seated, Monsieur."

He sat down and looked at the pale, wretched face of this woman, who was so beautiful and fresh when he parted from her.

"What has been the matter with you?" he said.

She replied amid her tears:

"You must have seen it—it is written on the door." And she hid her face under the sheet.

"How did that happen, my poor girl?"

"It was those dirty Prussians," she murmured. "They took me almost by force and poisoned me."

He could say nothing. He looked at her, twisting his *képi* on his knees.

The others kept looking at him, and he fancied he perceived an odor of corruption and infamy in this ward filled with women stricken with a loathsome and terrible disease.

"I do not think I shall get better. The doctor says it is very serious," said Irma.

Then, seeing the decoration on the officer's breast, she exclaimed:

"Oh, you got the cross! How pleased I am! How pleased I am! Oh, if I could kiss you!"

A shudder of fear and disgust came over the Captain at the very thought of such a kiss. He now wished to get away, to get into the air, and never to see this woman again. He stayed, however, not knowing how to take his leave. He stammered:

"Did you not take precautions?"

Irma's eyes flashed: "No, I wanted revenge even if it killed me, and I poisoned them all, all! As long as they were in Rouen I took no precautions. More than one will die through me. I promise you I took my revenge."

"So much the better," he remarked. Then, rising from his seat, he said:

"Well, I must go, for I have to be at the Colonel's at four o'clock."

"Already! You are going already! Oh, you

have only just come!" she said, with a burst of emotion.

But he insisted on leaving, remarking:

"You see I came immediately, but I must be at the Colonel's at four o'clock."

"Is it still Colonel Prune?" she asked.

"He is still Colonel. He was wounded twice."

"And your comrades? Are any killed?"

"Yes. Saint-Timon, Savagnat, Poli, Sapreval, Robert, De Courson, Pasafil, Santal Caraban, and Poivrin are dead. Sahel lost his arm, and Courvoisin's arm was crushed. Paquet lost his eye."

She listened with deep interest. Then, all at once, she faltered:

"Won't you kiss me before you go? Madame Langlois is not there."

And in spite of the disgust he felt he placed his lips to her pale forehead, while she threw her arms round him and poured frenzied kisses on his blue cloth cape.

"You will come to-morrow; say you will come. Promise me you will come."

"I promise you."

"Good-by, dear."

"Good-by."

And he went out, embarrassed at the gaze of the other patients in the ward, stooping as he walked to make himself look shorter. As soon as he reached the street he breathed freely.

That evening his comrades asked him:

"Well, how is Irma?"

"She has had pneumonia," he replied, in an embarrassed tone, "and is very ill."

But a little lieutenant who suspected something from his manner went to the information bureau,

and when the Captain came in to mess the following day he was greeted with a sally of laughter and raillery. They were getting even with him at last.

They found out that Irma had carried on outrageously with the Prussian staff officers; that she had traveled all over the country on horseback with a colonel of the Blue Hussars, and with many others besides; and that in Rouen they never called her anything but "the Prussian woman."

For a week the Captain was victimized by the rest of the regiment. He received by mail notices of directions to be followed, of symptoms supposed to be written by specialists, even medicines whose use was described on the package.

The Colonel, learning of this affair, remarked in a severe tone:

"Well, that was a fine acquaintance the Captain had! I shall congratulate him."

About twelve days later he received another letter from Irma. He tore it up and did not reply.

A week later she wrote again, saying she was very ill and wished to bid him farewell.

He did not reply.

A few days later he received a visit from the hospital chaplain. Irma Pavolin, on her deathbed, implored him to come.

He did not venture to refuse to accompany the chaplain, but he entered the hospital with his heart swelling with wicked hatred, wounded vanity, and humiliated pride.

He did not see any change in her, and thought she was deceiving him.

"What do you want of me?" he asked.

"I wanted to bid you farewell. It seems that I am sinking."

He did not believe her.

"You have made me the laughing-stock of the regiment, and I want this thing to stop," he said.

"What harm did I do you?" she asked.

He was annoyed at having no answer ready, and said:

"Do not think that I am coming here to be laughed at by everybody!"

She looked at him with her dull eyes, in which was a spark of anger, and repeated:

"What harm did I do you? I was not nice to you, was I? Did I ever ask you for anything? But for you I should not have given up Monsieur Templier-Papon, and I should not have been here today. No, come now, if any one has anything to reproach me with it is not you."

"I am not reproaching you," he replied, in an unsteady voice, "but I cannot continue to come here to see you, for your behavior with the Prussians was the scandal of the whole town."

She sprang up in bed in a sitting posture.

"My behavior with the Prussians? Why, I told you that they took me by force and that if I did not take precautions it was because I wanted to kill them. If I had wished to be cured, it would not have been difficult, *parbleu!* But I wanted to kill them, and I did kill some, so there!"

He remained standing.

"In any case, it is a disgrace," he said.

She breathed hard, and then resumed:

"What is a disgrace—to have hastened my own death in order to exterminate them? That is not the way you used to talk when you came to see me in Rue Jeanne-d'Arc! Ah, it is a disgrace! You would not have done as much with all your Cross of

Honor! I was more deserving of it than you, don't you see, more deserving than you, and I killed more Prussians than you did!"

He stood there before her in amazement, trembling with indignation.

"Oh, keep still . . . you know . . . keep still . . . because . . . those subjects . . . I do not allow them . . . to be mentioned. . . ."

But she paid no attention.

"Granting that you did do execution among the Prussians, would this have happened if you had prevented their coming to Rouen, tell me? It was you who ought to have stopped them, do you hear? And I did them more injury than you—yes, I, more injury—for I am going to die; while you flaunt about and play the gallant to ensnare women."

In every bed a head was raised and all glances were turned on this man in uniform, who stammered:

"Be still . . . you know . . . be still!"

But she would not be silent, and screamed:

"Oh, yes! You are a fine actor. I know you, so there! I know you. I tell you that I did them more harm than you did, I myself, and that I killed more men than all your regiment. Be off, hypocrite!"

And he left in haste, fled, taking long strides as he passed along the line of patients, who had become disturbed at the scene. And he heard Irma's gasping, wheezing voice calling after him:

"More than you; yes, I killed more than you, more than you. . . ."

He tore downstairs, four steps at a time, and went home and shut himself in his room.

The following day he heard that she was dead.

A LIFE: THE HISTORY OF A HEART

CHAPTER I

THE HOME BY THE SEA

THE weather was most distressing. It had rained all night. The roaring of the overflowing gutters filled the deserted streets, in which the houses, like sponges, absorbed the humidity, which, penetrating to the interior, made the walls sweat from cellar to garret. Jeanne had left the convent the day before, free for all time, ready to seize all the joys of life of which she had dreamed so long. She was afraid her father would not set out for the new home in bad weather, and for the hundredth time since daybreak she examined the horizon. Then she noticed that she had omitted to put her calendar in her traveling-bag. She took from the wall the lit-

tle card, which bore in gilt figures the date of the current year, 1819. Then she marked with a pencil the first four columns, drawing a line through the name of each saint up to the second day of May—the day she had left the convent.

A voice outside the door called "Jeannette."

"Come in, papa," Jeanne replied.

Her father entered. Baron Simon-Jacques Le Perthuis des Vauds was a gentleman of the previous century, eccentric and good. He was an enthusiastic disciple of Jean Jacques Rousseau, and had the tenderness of a lover for nature, in the fields, in the woods, and in animals. Of aristocratic birth, he hated instinctively the memory of the year 1793; but, being a philosopher by temperament and liberal by education, he execrated tyranny with an inoffensive and declamatory hatred. His great strength and equally his great weakness was his kind-heartedness, which had not arms enough to caress, to give, to embrace; the benevolence of a god, that gave freely, without questioning; in a word, a kindness springing from inertia, that had become almost a vice. He was full of theories, and had devised a plan of education for his daughter, to the end that she might become happy, good, upright, and gentle. She had lived at home until the age of twelve, when, despite the tears of her mother, she was placed in the Convent of the Sacred Heart. Her father had kept her severely secluded, cloistered, in ignorance of the secrets of life. He wished the Sisters to restore her to him pure at seventeen years of age, so that he might imbue her mind with a sort of rational poetry, and, by means of the fields, in the midst of the fruitful earth, unfold her soul, enlighten her ignorance through the aspect of love in nature,

through the simple tenderness of the animals, through the placid laws of existence. She was leaving the convent, radiant, full of the joy of life, ready for all the happiness, all the charming incidents her mind had pictured in idle hours and in the long quiet nights. She was like a portrait by Veronese, with her fair, glossy hair, which seemed to cast a radiance on her skin, a skin with the faintest tinge of pink, softened by a light velvety down, which could be perceived when the sun kissed her cheek. Her eyes were an opaque blue, like those of Dutch porcelain figures. She had a tiny mole on the left side of her nose and another on the right of her chin. She was tall, well developed, with a willowy figure. Her clear voice sounded at times a little too sharp, but her frank, sincere laugh spread joy around her. Often, with a familiar gesture, she would raise her hands to her temples to arrange her hair.

She ran to her father and embraced him warmly.

"Well, are we about to start?" she said.

He smiled, shook his head, and said, pointing toward the window: "How can we travel in such weather?"

But she implored in a cajoling and tender manner: "Oh, papa, do let us start! It will clear in the afternoon."

"But your mother never will consent to it."

"Yes, I promise you that she will; I will arrange that."

"If you succeed in persuading your mother, I am perfectly willing."

In a few moments she returned from her mother's room, shouting in a voice that could be heard throughout the house: "Papa, papa, mamma is willing! Have the horses harnessed."

The rain was not abating; one might almost have said that it was raining even harder when the carriage drove up to the door. Jeanne was ready to step in, when the Baroness came downstairs supported on one side by her husband and on the other by a tall housemaid, strong and strapping as a boy. This girl was a Norman woman of Caux, who looked at least twenty, although she was but eighteen. She was treated by the family as a second daughter, for she was Jeanne's foster-sister. Her name was Rosalie, and her chief duty lay in guiding the steps of her mistress, who had grown enormous in the last few years and also had an affection of the heart, which kept her complaining continually. The Baroness, gasping from overexertion, finally reached the doorstep of the old residence, looked out at the court, where the rain was streaming down, and remarked: "It really is not wise."

Her husband, always pleasant, replied: "It was you who desired it, Madame Adelaide." He always preceded her pompous name of Adelaide with the title "Madame," with an air of half-respectful mockery. Madame mounted with difficulty into the carriage, causing all the springs to bend. The Baron sat beside her, while Jeanne and Rosalie were seated opposite with their backs to the horses. Ludivine, the cook, brought a heap of wraps to put over their knees, and two baskets, which were placed under the seats; then she climbed on the box beside Father Simon, wrapping herself in a great rug that covered her completely. The porter and his wife came to bid them good-by as they closed the carriage door, taking the last orders about the trunks, which were to follow in a wagon. So they set out. Father Simon, the coachman, with head bowed and back

bent in the pouring rain, was completely covered by his box-coat with its triple cape. The howling storm beat upon the carriage windows and inundated the highway.

They drove rapidly to the wharf and continued alongside the line of tall-masted vessels, until they reached the boulevard of Mont Riboudet. Then they crossed the meadows, where from time to time a drowned willow, its branches drooping limply, could be distinguished faintly through the mist of rain. No one spoke. Even their minds, like the earth, seemed to be saturated with the moisture.

The Baroness leaned her head against the cushions and closed her eyes. The Baron looked out with mournful eyes at the drenched and monotonous landscape. Rosalie, with a parcel on her knee, was dreaming, in the dull reverie of a peasant. But Jeanne, under this downpour, felt herself revive like a plant that has been shut up and has just been restored to the air; and so great was her joy that, like foliage, it sheltered her heart from sadness. Although she did not speak, she longed to burst out singing, to reach out her hands to catch the rain that she might drink it. She enjoyed to the full being carried along rapidly by the horses, enjoyed gazing at the desolate landscape and feeling herself under shelter amid this general inundation. Beneath the pelting rain the gleaming backs of the two horses emitted a warm steam.

Little by little the Baroness fell asleep, and presently began to snore sonorously. Her husband leaned over and placed in her hands a little leather pocketbook.

This awakened her, and she looked at the pocketbook with the stupid, sleepy look of one suddenly

aroused. It fell off her lap and sprang open, and gold and bank-bills were scattered on the floor of the carriage. This roused her completely, and Jeanne gave vent to her mirth in a merry peal of girlish laughter.

The Baron picked up the money and placed it on her knees. "This, my dear," he said, "is all that is left of my farm at Elétot. I have sold it—so as to be able to repair The Poplars, where we shall often live in the future."

She counted six thousand four hundred francs and quietly put them in her pocket. This was the ninth of thirty-one farms that they had inherited which they had sold in this way. Nevertheless, they still possessed about twenty thousand livres income annually in land rentals, which, with proper care, would have yielded about thirty thousand francs a year.

Living simply as they did, this income would have sufficed had there not been a bottomless hole always open in their house—kind-hearted generosity. It dried up the money in their hands as the sun dries the water in marshes. It flowed, fled, disappeared. How? No one knew. Frequently one would say to the other, "I don't know how it happens, but I have spent one hundred francs to-day, and I have bought nothing of any consequence." But this faculty of giving was one of the greatest pleasures of their lives, and they all agreed on this point in a superb and touching manner.

Jeanne asked her father: "Is it beautiful now, my castle?" The Baron replied: "You shall see, my little girl."

The storm began to abate. The vault of clouds seemed to rise and heighten, and suddenly, through

a rift, a long ray of sunshine fell upon the fields; presently the clouds separated, showing the blue firmament, and then, like the tearing of a veil, the opening grew larger and the beautiful azure sky, clear and fathomless, spread over the world. A fresh and gentle breeze passed over the earth like a happy sigh, and as they passed gardens or woods they heard occasionally the bright chirp of a bird as he dried his wings.

Evening was approaching. Every one in the carriage was asleep except Jeanne. They stopped to rest and feed the horses. The sun had set. In the distance bells were heard. They passed a little village as the inhabitants were lighting their lamps; and the sky became illuminated by myriads of stars. Suddenly they saw behind a hill, through the branches of the fir trees, the moon rising, red and full, as if it were torpid with sleep.

The air was so mild that the windows were not closed. Jeanne, exhausted with dreams and happy visions, was now asleep. Finally they stopped. Some men and women were standing before the carriage door with lanterns in their hands. They had arrived. Jeanne, suddenly awakened, was the first to jump out. Her father and Rosalie had practically to carry the Baroness, who was groaning and continually repeating in a weak voice: "Oh, my God, my poor children!" She refused all offers of refreshment, but went to bed and immediately fell asleep.

Jeanne and her father, the Baron, took supper together. They were in perfect sympathy with each other. Later, seized with a childlike joy, they set out on a tour of inspection through the restored manor-house. It was one of those high and vast

Norman residences that comprise both farmhouse and castle, built of white stone, which had turned gray, and large enough to contain a whole generation.

An immense hall divided the house from front to rear, and a staircase went up at both sides of the entrance, meeting in a bridge on the first floor. The huge drawing-room was on the ground floor to the right, and was hung with tapestries representing birds and foliage. All the furniture was covered with fine needlework tapestry illustrating La Fontaine's fables, and Jeanne was delighted at finding a chair she had loved as a child, which pictured the story of the fox and the stork.

Beside the drawing-room was the library, full of old books, and two unused rooms; at the left were the dining-room, the laundry, the kitchen, and offices.

A corridor divided the whole second floor, the doors of ten rooms opening into it. At the end, on the right, was Jeanne's room. She and her father went in. He had had it all newly done over, using the furniture and draperies that had been in the storeroom.

There were some very old Flemish tapestries, with their peculiar figures. At sight of her bed, the young girl uttered a cry of joy. Four large birds carved in oak, black from age and highly polished, bore up the bed and seemed to be its protectors. On the sides were carved two wide garlands of flowers and fruit; and four finely fluted columns terminating in Corinthian capitals supported a cornice of cupids with roses intertwined. The tester and the coverlet were of antique blue silk embroidered in gold *fleurs de lys*. When Jeanne had sufficiently admired it she lifted the candle to

examine the tapestries and the allegories they represented. They were mostly conventional subjects, but the last hanging represented a drama. Near a rabbit, which was still nibbling, a young man lay stretched out, apparently dead. A young girl gazing at him was plunging a sword into her bosom, and the fruit of the tree had turned black. Jeanne gave up trying to divine the meaning underlying this picture, when she saw in the corner a tiny little animal which the rabbit, had he lived, could have swallowed like a blade of grass; and yet it was a lion. Then she recognized the story of Pyramus and Thisbe; and though she smiled at the simplicity of the design, she felt happy to have in her room this love adventure, which would continually speak to her of her cherished hopes, and every night this legendary love would hover about her dreams.

It struck eleven; the Baron kissed Jeanne good night and retired to his room. Before retiring Jeanne cast a last glance round her room and then regretfully extinguished the candle. Through her window she could see the bright moonlight bathing the trees and the wonderful landscape. Presently she rose, opened a window, and looked out. The night was so clear that one could see as plainly as by daylight. She looked across the park, with its two long avenues of very tall poplars that gave its name to the château and separated it from the two farms that belonged to it, one occupied by the Couillard family, the other by the Martins. Beyond the inclosure stretched a long, uncultivated plain thickly overgrown with rushes, where the breeze whistled day and night. The land ended abruptly in a steep white cliff three hundred feet high, with its base in the ocean waves.

Jeanne looked out over the long, undulating surface that seemed to slumber beneath the heavens. All the fragrance of the earth was in the night air. The odor of jasmine rose from the lower windows, and light whiffs of briny air and of seaweed were wafted from the ocean.

Merely to breathe was enough for Jeanne, and the restful calm of the country was like a soothing bath. She felt as if her heart was expanding, and she began dreaming of love. What was it? She did not know. She only knew that she would adore *him,* with all her soul, and that he would cherish her with all his strength. They would walk hand in hand on nights like this, hearing the beating of their hearts, mingling their love with the sweet simplicity of the summer nights, in such close communion of thought that by the sole power of their tenderness they could easily penetrate each other's most secret thoughts. This should continue forever in the calm of an enduring affection. It seemed to her that she felt *him* there, beside her. And an unusual sensation came over her. She remained long musing thus, when suddenly she thought she heard a footstep behind the house. "If it were *he!*" But it passed on and she felt as if she had been deceived. The air became cooler. The day broke. Slowly penetrating the gleaming clouds, touching with fire the trees, the plains, the ocean, all the horizon, the great flaming orb of the sun appeared.

Jeanne felt herself becoming mad with happiness. A delirious joy, an infinite tenderness at the splendor of nature, overcame her fluttering heart. It was *her* sun, *her* dawn, the beginning of *her* life! Thoroughly fatigued at last, she flung herself down and slept till her father called her at eight

o'clock. He walked into the room and proposed to show her the improvements of the castle, of *her* castle. The road, called the parish road, connecting the farms joined the highroad between Havre and Fécamp a mile and a half farther on.

Jeanne and the Baron inspected everything, and returned home for breakfast. When the meal was over, as the Baroness had decided that she would rest, the Baron proposed to Jeanne that they should go down to Yport. They set out, and passing through the hamlet of Etouvent, where the poplars were, and through the wooded slope by a winding valley leading down to the sea, they presently perceived the village of Yport. Women sat in their doorways mending linen; brown fish-nets were hanging against the doors of the huts, where an entire family lived in one room. It was a typical little French fishing village, with all its concomitant odors. To Jeanne it was all like a scene in a play. On turning a corner they saw before them the limitless blue ocean. They bought a brill from a fisherman, and a sailor offered to take them out sailing, repeating his name, "Lastique, Joséphin Lastique," several times that they might not forget it, and the Baron promised to remember. They walked home, chattering like two children, carrying the big fish between them, Jeanne having pushed her father's walking-stick through its gills.

CHAPTER II

HAPPY DAYS

A DELIGHTFUL life began for Jeanne, a life in the open air. She wandered along the roads, or into the little winding valleys, their sides covered with a fleece of gorse blossoms, the strong, sweet odor of which intoxicated her like the bouquet of wine, while the distant sound of the waves rolling on the beach seemed like a billow rocking her spirit.

A love of solitude came upon her in the sweet freshness of this landscape and in the calm of the rounded horizon, and she would remain sitting so long on the hill-tops that the wild rabbits would bound past her.

She planted memories everywhere, as seeds are cast upon the earth, memories whose roots hold till death. It seemed to Jeanne that she was casting a little of her heart into every fold of these valleys. She became infatuated with sea bathing.

When she was well out from shore she would float on her back, her arms crossed, her eyes lost in the profound blue of the sky, which was cleft by the flight of a swallow or the white silhouette of a sea-bird.

After these excursions she invariably came back to the castle pale with hunger, but light, alert, a smile on her lips and her eyes sparkling with happiness.

The Baron on his part was planning great agricultural enterprises. Occasionally, also, he went out to sea with the sailors of Yport. On several occasions he went fishing for mackerel, and again, by moonlight, he would haul in the nets laid the night before. He loved to hear the masts creak, to breathe in the fresh and whistling gusts of wind that arose during the night; and after tacking a long time to find the buoys, guiding himself by a peak of rocks, the roof of a belfry or the Fécamp lighthouse, he delighted to remain motionless beneath the first gleams of the rising sun, which made the slimy backs of the large fan-shaped rays and the fat bellies of the turbots glisten on the deck of the boat.

At each meal he gave an enthusiastic account of his expeditions, and the Baroness in her turn told how many times she had walked down the main avenue of poplars.

As she had been advised to take exercise, she made a business of walking, beginning as soon as the air grew warm. Leaning upon Rosalie's arm and dragging her left foot, which was rather heavier than the right, she wandered interminably up and down from the house to the edge of the wood, sitting down for five minutes at either end. The walk-

ing was resumed in the afternoon. A physician, consulted ten years before, had spoken of hypertrophy because she had suffered from suffocation. Ever since, this word had been used to describe the ailment of the Baroness. The Baron would say "my wife's hypertrophy," and Jeanne "mamma's hypertrophy," as they would have spoken of her hat, her gown, or her umbrella. She had been very pretty in her youth and slim as a reed. Now she had grown older, stouter, but she remained poetical, having always retained the impression of *Corinne* which she had read as a girl. She read all the sentimental love-stories it was possible to collect, and her thoughts wandered among tender adventures in which she always figured as the heroine. Her new home was infinitely pleasing to her because it formed such a beautiful framework for her romantic soul, the surrounding woods, the waste land, and the proximity of the ocean recalling to her mind the novels of Sir Walter Scott, which she had been devouring for some months. On rainy days she remained shut up in her room, sending Rosalie for the drawer containing her "souvenirs," which meant to the Baroness all her old private and family letters.

Occasionally Jeanne replaced Rosalie in the walks with her mother, and she listened eagerly to the tales of the latter's childhood. The young girl saw herself in all these romantic stories, and was astonished at the similarity of ideas and desires; each heart imagines itself to have been the first to tremble at those very sensations that awakened the hearts of the first beings, and that will awaken the hearts of the last.

One afternoon, as the Baroness and Jeanne were

resting on the bench at the end of the walk, a stout priest who was moving in their direction greeted them with a bow, while still at a distance. He bowed when within three feet of them, and, assuming a smiling air, said: "Well, Madame la Baronne, how are you?" It was the village priest. The Baroness seldom went to church, though she liked priests, from a sort of religious instinct peculiar to women. She had, in fact, entirely forgotten the Abbé Picot, her priest, and blushed as she saw him. She made apologies for not having prepared for his visit, but the good man was not at all embarrassed. He looked at Jeanne, complimented her on her appearance, and sat down, placing his three-cornered hat on his knees. He was very stout, very red, and perspired profusely. He drew from his pocket every moment an enormous checked handkerchief and passed it over his face and neck, but hardly was the task completed when necessity forced him to repeat the process. He was a typical country priest, talkative and kindly.

Presently the Baron appeared. He was very friendly to the priest and invited him to dinner. The priest was well versed in the art of being pleasant, thanks to the unconscious astuteness which the guiding of souls gives to the most mediocre of men who are called by the chance of events to exercise a power over their fellows. When dessert came he had grown quite merry, with the gayety that follows a pleasant meal, and, as if struck by an idea, he said: "I have a new parishioner whom I must present to you, Monsieur le Vicomte de Lamare."

The Baroness, who was at home in heraldry, inquired whether he was of the family of Lamares of Eure? The priest answered: "Yes, Madame;

he is the son of Vicomte Jean de Lamare, who died last year."

After this the Baroness, who loved the nobility above all other things, inquired the history of the young Vicomte. He had paid his father's debts, sold the family castle, and made his home on one of the three farms that he owned in the town of Etouvent. These estates brought him in an income of five or six thousand livres. The Vicomte was economical and lived in this modest manner for two or three years, so that he might save enough to cut a figure in society, and to marry advantageously, without contracting debts or mortgaging his farms. The priest added: "He is a very charming young man, steady and quiet, though there is very little to amuse him in the country."

"Bring him in to see us, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the Baron. "It will be a distraction for him occasionally."

After the coffee the Baron and the priest took a turn about the grounds and then returned to say good night to the ladies.

CHAPTER III

MONSIEUR DE LAMARE

THE following Sunday the Baroness and Jeanne went to mass, prompted by a feeling of respect for their pastor; and after service they waited to see the priest and invite him to luncheon the following Thursday. He came out of the sacristy leaning familiarly on the arm of a tall young man. As soon as he perceived the ladies he exclaimed:

"How fortunate! Allow me, Baroness and Mademoiselle Jeanne, to present to you your neighbor, Monsieur le Vicomte de Lamare."

The Vicomte said he had long desired to make their acquaintance, and began to converse in a well-bred manner. He had a face of which women dream and which men dislike. His black, wavy hair shaded a smooth, sunburned forehead, and heavy, straight eyebrows, that looked al-

most artificial, cast a deep and tender shadow over his dark eyes, the whites of which had a bluish tinge.

His long, thick eyelashes accentuated the passionate eloquence of his expression, which wrought havoc in the drawing-rooms of society, and made peasant girls carrying baskets turn round to look at him. The languorous fascination of his glance impressed one with the depth of his thoughts and lent weight to his slightest words. His beard, fine and glossy, concealed a somewhat heavy jaw.

Two days later M. de Lamare made his first call, just as they were discussing the best place for a new rustic bench. The Vicomte was consulted and agreed with the Baroness, who differed in opinion with her husband.

M. de Lamare expatiated on the picturesqueness of the country, and from time to time, as if by chance, his eyes met those of Jeanne, whereat she felt a strange sensation at his quickly averted glance, which betrayed tender admiration and an awakened sympathy.

M. de Lamare's father, who had died the preceding year, had known an intimate friend of the Baroness's father, M. Cultaux, and this fact led to an endless conversation about family, relatives, and dates, and names heard in her childhood were recalled, and led to reminiscences.

The Baron, whose nature was rather uncultivated, and whose beliefs and prejudices were not those of his class, knew little about the neighboring families. He inquired about them from the Vicomte, who responded:

"Oh, there are very few of the nobility in the district," just as he might have said, "There are

very few rabbits on the hills," and he began to particularize: There was the Marquis de Coutelière, a sort of leader of Norman aristocracy; the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Briseville, people of excellent stock, but keeping to themselves; and the Comte de Fourville, a kind of ogre, who was said to have made his wife die of sorrow, and who lived as a huntsman in his château of La Vrillette, built on a pond. There were a few *parvenus* among them who had bought properties here and there, but the Vicomte did not know them.

As he left his last glance was for Jeanne, as if it were a special, tender, and cordial farewell. The Baroness was delighted with him, and the Baron said: "Yes, indeed, he is a gentleman." He was invited to dinner the following week, and from that time came regularly.

He usually arrived about four o'clock in the afternoon, went to join the Baroness in her avenue, and offered her his arm while she took her "exercise," as she called her daily walks. When Jeanne was at home she would walk on the other side of her mother, supporting her; and all three walked slowly back and forth from one end of the avenue to the other. He seldom addressed Jeanne directly, but his eyes frequently met hers.

He went to Yport several times with Jeanne and the Baron. One evening, when they were on the beach, Père Lastique accosted them, and without removing his pipe, the absence of which would possibly have been more remarkable than the loss of his nose, he said:

"With this wind, Monsieur le Baron, we could easily go to Étretat and back to-morrow."

Jeanne clasped her hands imploringly:

"Oh, papa, let us do it!"

The Baron turned to M. de Lamare.

"Will you join us, Vicomte? We can take breakfast down there."

The matter was decided at once. At daybreak Jeanne was up and waiting for her father, who dressed more slowly. They walked in the dew across the level land, and then through the wood, vibrant with the singing of birds. The Vicomte and Père Lastique were seated on a capstan.

Two other sailors helped to shove off the boat from shore, which was not easy on the shingly beach. Once the boat was afloat, they all took their seats, and the two sailors who remained on shore shoved it off. A light, steady breeze was blowing from the ocean, and they hoisted the sail, veered a little, and then sailed along smoothly with hardly any motion.

To landward the high cliff at the right cast a shadow on the water at its base, and patches of sunlit grass here and there varied its monotonous whiteness. Yonder, behind them, brown sails were coming out of the white harbor of Fécamp, and ahead of them they saw a rock of curious shape, rounded, with gaps in it, looking something like an enormous elephant with its trunk in the water; it was the little port of Étretat.

Jeanne, a little dizzy from the motion of the waves, held the side of the boat with one hand as she looked out into the distance. It seemed to her as if only three things in the world were really beautiful: light, space, water.

No one spoke. Père Lastique, who was at the tiller, took a pull every now and then from a bottle hidden under the seat; and he smoked a short pipe

which seemed inextinguishable, although he never seemed to relight it or refill it.

The Baron, seated in the bow, looked after the sail. Jeanne and the Vicomte seemed a little embarrassed at being seated side by side. Some unknown power seemed to make their glances meet whenever they raised their eyes; between them already existed that subtle and vague sympathy that arises so rapidly between two young people when the man is good-looking and the girl is pretty. They were happy in each other's society, perhaps because they were thinking of each other. The rising sun was beginning to pierce through the slight mist, and as its beams grew stronger they were reflected in the smooth surface of the sea as in a mirror.

"How beautiful!" murmured Jeanne, with emotion.

"Beautiful indeed!" answered the Vicomte. The serene beauty of the morning awakened an echo in their hearts.

Suddenly they saw the great arches of Étretat, like two supports of a cliff standing in the sea high enough for vessels to pass under them; while a sharp-pointed white rock rose in front of the first arch. They reached shore, and the Baron got out first to make fast the boat, while the Vicomte lifted Jeanne ashore so that she should not wet her feet. They then walked up the shingly beach side by side, and overheard Père Lastique say to the Baron: "Ah, they would make a pretty couple!"

They took breakfast in a little inn near the beach, and while the ocean had lulled their thoughts and made them silent, the breakfast-table had the opposite effect and they chattered like children on

a vacation. The slightest thing gave rise to laughter.

Père Lastique, on taking his place at table, carefully hid his lighted pipe in his cap. That made them laugh. A fly, attracted no doubt by his red nose, persistently alighted on it, and every time it did so they burst into laughter. Finally the old man could stand it no longer, and murmured: "It is devilish persistent," whereupon Jeanne and the Vicomte laughed till they cried.

After breakfast Jeanne suggested that they should take a walk. The Vicomte rose, but the Baron preferred to bask in the sunshine on the bench.

"Go on, my children; you will find me here in an hour."

They walked straight ahead, passing several cottages and finally a small château resembling a large farm, and found themselves in an open valley that extended for some distance. They now had a wild longing to run at large in the fields. Jeanne felt almost as if she had a humming in her ears from all the new and rapidly changing sensations she had experienced. The burning rays of the sun fell on them. On both sides of the road the crops were bending low from the heat. The grasshoppers, as numerous as the blades of grass, were uttering their thin, shrill cry.

Perceiving a wood a little farther at the right, they walked over to it. They saw a narrow path between two hedges, shaded by tall trees that shut out the sun. A sort of moist freshness was in the air, giving them a sensation of chilliness. There was no grass, owing to the lack of sunlight, but the ground was covered with a carpet of moss.

"See, we can sit down there a little while," said Jeanne.

They sat down and looked about them at the numerous forms of life that were in the air and on the ground at their feet, for a ray of sunlight penetrating the dense foliage brought them into its light.

"How delightful it is here! How lovely it is in the country! There are moments when I should like to be a fly or a butterfly and hide in the flowers," said Jeanne, with emotion.

They spoke in the low tones one uses in exchanging confidences, telling of their daily lives and of their tastes, and declaring that they were already disgusted with the world, tired of its useless monotony; it was always the same thing; there was no truth, no sincerity in it.

The world of society! She would gladly have made its acquaintance; but she felt convinced beforehand that it was not equal to a country life; and the more their hearts seemed to be in sympathy, the more ceremonious they became, the more frequently their glances met and blended, smiling; and it seemed that a new feeling of benevolence was awakened in them, a wider affection, an interest in a thousand things of which hitherto they never had thought.

They wended their way back, but the Baron had already set off on foot for the Chambre aux Demoiselles, a grotto in a cleft at the summit of one of the cliffs, and they waited for him at the inn. He did not return until five o'clock in the evening, after a long walk on the cliffs.

They got into the boat, and set off smoothly with the wind at their backs, seeming to make hardly any headway. The breeze was irregular, at one moment

filling the sail and then letting it flap idly along the mast. The sea seemed opaque and lifeless, and the sun was slowly approaching the horizon. The lulling motion of the sea made them silent again. Presently Jeanne said: "How I should love to travel!"

"Yes, but it is tiresome to travel alone; there should be at least two, to exchange ideas," answered the Vicomte. She reflected a moment.

"That is true—I like to walk alone, however—how pleasant it is to dream all alone——"

He gazed at her intently:

"Two can dream as well as one."

She lowered her eyes. Was it a hint? Possibly. She looked out at the horizon as if to discover something beyond it, and then said slowly:

"I should like to go to Italy—and Greece—ah, yes, Greece!—and to Corsica—it must be so wild and so beautiful!"

He said he preferred Switzerland because of its châlets and its lakes.

"No," said she, "I like new countries like Corsica, or very old countries full of souvenirs, like Greece. It must be delightful to find the traces of those peoples whose history we have known since childhood, to see places where great deeds were accomplished."

The Vicomte, less enthusiastic, exclaimed:

"As for me, England attracts me very much: so much may be learned there."

Then they talked about the world in general, discussing the attractions of each country from the poles to the equator, growing enthusiastic over imaginary scenes and the peculiar manners of certain peoples, the Chinese and the Lapps; but they ar-

rived at the conclusion that the most beautiful country in the world was France, with its temperate climate, cool in summer, mild in winter, its rich soil, its green forests, its worship of the fine arts, which had existed nowhere else since the glorious centuries of Athens. Then they were silent. The setting sun left a wide, dazzling train of light, which extended from the horizon to the edge of their boat. The wind subsided, the ripples disappeared, and the motionless sail was red in the light of the dying day. A limitless calm seemed to settle down on space and make a silence amid this conjunction of elements; and by degrees the sun slowly sank into the ocean.

Then a fresh breeze arose, a little shiver went over the surface of the water, as if the engulfed orb cast a sigh of satisfaction across the world. The twilight was short; night fell with its myriad stars. Père Lastique took the oars, and they saw that the sea was phosphorescent. Jeanne and the Vicomte, side by side, watched the fitful gleams in the wake of the boat. They were hardly thinking, but simply gazing vaguely, breathing in the beauty of the evening in a state of delicious contentment. Jeanne had one hand on the seat, and her neighbor's finger touched it as if by accident; she did not move; she was surprised, happy, though embarrassed at this slight contact.

When she reached home that evening and went to her room, she felt strangely disturbed, and so affected that the slightest thing impelled her to weep. She looked at her clock, imagining that the little bee on the pendulum was beating like a heart, the heart of a friend; that it was aware of her whole life; that with its quick, regular ticking it would accompany her whole life; and she stopped the

golden bee to press a kiss on its wings. She would have kissed anything, no matter what. She remembered having hidden one of her old dolls of former days at the bottom of a drawer; she looked for it, took it out, and was delighted to see it again, as we are to see loved friends; and pressing it to her breast, she covered its painted cheeks and curly wig with kisses. And as she held it in her arms she wondered whether he could be the husband promised through a thousand secret voices, whom a superlatively good Providence had thus thrown across her path. Was he, indeed, the being created for her — the being to whom she would devote her existence? Were they two predestined ones whose blended affection would beget love?

She did not as yet feel that tumultuous emotion, that mad enchantment, those deep stirrings which she thought were essential to the tender passion; but it seemed to her that she was beginning to fall in love, for she felt a sudden faintness when she thought of him, and she thought of him incessantly. His presence stirred her heart; she blushed and grew pale when their eyes met, and trembled at the sound of his voice.

From day to day the longing for love increased. She consulted the marguerites, the clouds, and coins that she tossed in the air.

One day her father said to her:

"Make yourself look pretty to-morrow morning."

"Why, papa?"

"That is a secret," he replied.

When she came downstairs the following morning, looking fresh and sweet in a pretty light frock, she found the drawing-room table covered with boxes of bonbons, and on a chair lay a large bouquet.

A covered wagon drove into the courtyard, bearing the inscription: "Lerat, Confectioner, Fécamp; Wedding Breakfasts," and from the back of the wagon Ludivine and a kitchen maid were taking out large flat baskets, which emitted an appetizing odor.

The Vicomte de Lamare appeared on the scene; his trousers were strapped down under his dainty boots of patent leather, which made his feet appear smaller. His long frock-coat, tight at the waist-line, was open at the bosom, showing the lace of his ruffle; and a fine neckcloth wound several times round his neck obliged him to hold erect his handsome brown head, with its air of serious distinction. Jeanne, in astonishment, looked at him as if she never had seen him before. She thought he looked the *grand seigneur* from head to foot.

He bowed and said, smiling:

"Well, comrade, are you ready?"

"But what is it? What is going on," she stammered.

"You will know presently," said the Baron.

The carriage drove up to the door, and Madame Adelaide, in festal array, descended the staircase, leaning on the arm of Rosalie, who was so much af-

fected at the sight of M. de Lamare's elegant appearance that the Baron whispered:

"I say, Vicomte, I think our maid admires you."

The Vicomte blushed up to his ears, pretended not to have heard, and, taking up the enormous bouquet, handed it to Jeanne. She accepted it, more astonished than ever. All four got into the carriage, and Ludivine, who brought a cup of bouillon to the Baroness to sustain her strength, said:

"Truly, Madame, one would say it was a wedding!"

They alighted as soon as they entered Yport, and as they walked through the village the sailors, in their new clothes, still showing the creases, came out of their homes, and shaking hands with the Baron, followed the party as if it were a procession. The Vicomte, who had offered his arm to Jeanne, walked with her at the head.

When they reached the church they stopped, and an acolyte appeared, holding upright a large silver crucifix, followed by another boy in red and white who bore a chalice containing holy water.

Then came three old cantors, one of them limping; then the trumpet ("serpent"), and last, the *curé,* with his gold-embroidered stole. He smiled and nodded a greeting; then, with his eyes half closed, his lips moving in prayer, his biretta well over his forehead, he followed his surpliced bodyguard, walking in the direction of the sea.

On the beach a crowd was standing around a new boat wreathed with flowers. Its mast, sail, and ropes were covered with long streamers of ribbon that floated in the breeze, and the name *Jeanne* was painted in gold letters on the stern.

Père Lastique, the proprietor of this boat, built

with the Baron's money, advanced to meet the procession. All the men simultaneously took off their hats, and a row of pious persons, wearing long black cloaks falling in large folds from their shoulders, knelt in a circle at sight of the crucifix.

The *curé* walked, with an acolyte on either side of him, to one end of the boat, while, at the other end, the three old cantors, in their white surplices, with a serious air and eyes fixed on the psalter, sang at the top of their voices in the clear morning air. Each time they stopped to take breath, the "serpent" continued its bellowing alone, and as he puffed out his cheeks the musician's little gray eyes disappeared, and the skin of his forehead and neck seemed to distend.

The motionless, transparent sea seemed to be taking part meditatively in the christening of this boat, rolling its tiny waves, no higher than a finger, with the faint sound of a rake on the shingle. And the large white gulls, with their wings unfurled, circled about in the blue heavens, flying away and then coming back in a curve above the heads of the kneeling crowd, as if to see what they were doing.

The singing ceased after an *Amen* that lasted five minutes; and the priest, in an unctuous voice, murmured some Latin words, of which one could hear only the sonorous endings. He then walked round the boat, sprinkling it with holy water, and next began to murmur the *Oremus,* standing beside the boat opposite the sponsors, who remained motionless, hand in hand.

The Vicomte wore his usual grave expression, but Jeanne, choking with a sudden emotion, and on the verge of fainting, began to tremble so violently that her teeth chattered. The dream that had

haunted her for some time was suddenly beginning, as if in a kind of hallucination, to take the appearance of reality. They had spoken of a wedding; a priest was present, blessing them; men in surplices were singing psalms: was it not she whom they were giving in marriage?

Did her fingers send out an electric shock? Did the emotion of her heart follow the course of her veins until it reached the heart of her companion? Did he understand, did he guess, was he, like herself, pervaded by a sort of intoxication of love? Or else, did he know by experience, alone, that no woman could resist him? She suddenly noticed that he was pressing her hand, gently at first, and then tighter, tighter till he almost crushed it. And, without moving a muscle of his face, without any one perceiving it, he said—yes, he certainly said:

"Oh, Jeanne, if you would consent, this should be our betrothal."

She lowered her head very slowly, perhaps meaning it for "yes." And the priest, who was still sprinkling the holy water, sprinkled some on their fingers.

The ceremony was over. The women rose. The return was unceremonious. The crucifix had lost its dignity in the hands of the acolyte, who walked rapidly, the crucifix swaying to right and left, or bending forward as if it would fall. The priest, who was not praying now, walked hurriedly behind them; the cantors and the musician with the "serpent" had disappeared by a narrow street, so as to get off their surplices without delay; and the sailors hurried along in groups. One thought prompted their haste and made their mouths water.

A good breakfast was awaiting them at The Pop-

lars. The large table was set in the courtyard, under the apple trees. Sixty persons sat down to table, sailors and peasants. The Baroness sat in the middle, with a priest at either side of her, one from Yport and the other belonging to The Poplars. The Baron was seated opposite her, the Mayor sat at one side of him, and his wife, a thin peasant woman, already aging, who kept smiling and bowing to all around her, at the other.

Jeanne, seated beside her co-sponsor, was in a sea of happiness. She saw nothing, knew nothing, and remained silent, her mind bewildered with joy.

Presently she said:

"What is your Christian name?"

"Julien," he replied. "Did you not know?"

But she made no answer, thinking to herself:

"How often I shall repeat that name!"

When the feast was over, the courtyard was given up to the sailors, and the others went over to the other side of the château. The Baroness began to take her exercise, leaning on the arm of the Baron and accompanied by the two priests. Jeanne and Julien went toward the wood and walked along one of the mossy paths. Suddenly seizing her hands, the Vicomte said:

"Tell me, will you be my wife?"

She lowered her head, and as he stammered: "Answer me, I implore you!" she raised her eyes to his timidly, and he read his answer there.

CHAPTER IV

MARRIAGE AND DISILLUSION

THE Baron, one morning, entered Jeanne's room before she was up, and sitting down at the foot of her bed, said:

"Monsieur le Vicomte de Lamare has asked us for your hand in marriage."

She longed to hide her face under the sheets.

Her father continued:

"We have postponed our answer for the present."

She gasped, choking with emotion. At the end of a minute the Baron, smiling, added:

"We did not wish to do anything without consulting you. Your mother and I are not opposed to this marriage, but we shall not seek to influence you. You are much richer than he; but, when it is a question of the happiness of a life, one should not think too much about money. He has no relatives left. If you marry him, then, it

would be you, our daughter, who would go among strangers. The young man pleases us. Would he please you?"

She stammered, blushing up to the roots of her hair:

"I am willing, papa."

And the father, looking into her eyes, and still smiling, murmured:

"I half suspected it, young lady."

She lived till evening in a state of exhilaration, not knowing what she was doing, mechanically thinking of one thing by mistake for another, and with a feeling of weariness, although she had not walked at all.

Toward six o'clock, as she was sitting with her mother under the plane tree, the Vicomte appeared.

Jeanne's heart began to throb wildly. The young man approached them, apparently without emotion. When he was close beside them, he took the Baroness's hand and kissed her fingers; then, raising to his lips the trembling hand of the young girl, he imprinted upon it a long, tender, and grateful kiss.

The radiant season of betrothal began. They would chat together alone in the corner of the drawing-room, or seated on the moss at the end of the wood overlooking the plain. Sometimes they walked in the Baroness's avenue, he talking of the future, she with her eyes cast down, looking at the dusty footprints of the Baroness.

Once the matter was decided, they desired to waste no time in preliminaries. It was, therefore, decided that the ceremony should take place in six weeks, on the fifteenth of August, and that the bride and groom should set out immediately on their wed-

ding journey. Jeanne, on being consulted as to which country she would like to visit, decided on Corsica, where they could be more alone than in the cities in Italy.

They awaited the moment appointed for their marriage without too great impatience, but enfolded, lost in a delicious affection, expressed in the exquisite charm of insignificant caresses, pressure of hands, long, passionate glances in which their souls seemed to blend, and vaguely tortured by an uncertain longing for they knew not what.

They decided to invite no one to the wedding except Aunt Lison, the Baron's sister, who boarded in a convent at Versailles. After the death of their father, the Baroness wished to keep her sister with her. But the old maid, possessed by the idea that she was in every one's way, was useless, and a nuisance, retired into one of those religious houses that rent apartments to people that live a sad and lonely existence. She came from time to time to pass a month or two with her family.

She was a little woman of few words, who always kept in the background, appeared only at mealtimes, and then retired to her room.

She looked like a kind old lady, though she was only forty-two, and had a sad, gentle expression. She never had been made much of by her family as a child, being neither pretty nor lively; she never had been petted, and she would stay quietly in a corner. She had always been neglected. As a young girl nobody paid any attention to her. She was something like a shadow, or a familiar object, a living piece of furniture, which one is accustomed to see every day, but about which one does not trouble himself.

Her sister, from long habit, looked upon her as a failure, an altogether insignificant being. They all treated her with careless familiarity, which concealed a sort of contemptuous kindness. She called herself Lise, but seemed embarrassed at this frivolous youthful name. When they saw that she probably would not marry, they changed it from Lise to Lison, and since Jeanne's birth she had become "Aunt Lison," a poor relation, very neat, extremely timid, even with her sister and her brother-in-law, who loved her, but with an uncertain affection, verging on indifference, with an unconscious compassion and a natural benevolence.

Sometimes, when the Baroness talked of far-away things that happened in her youth, she would say, in order to fix a date: "It was the time that Lison had that attack."

They never said more than that; and this "attack" remained shrouded in mystery as in a cloud.

One evening Lise, who was then twenty, had thrown herself into the water, no one knew why. Nothing in her life or her manner gave any intimation of this seizure. They fished her out half dead, and her parents, raising their hands in horror, instead of seeking the mysterious cause of this action, had contented themselves with calling it "that attack," as if they were talking of the accident that happened to the horse Coco, which had broken his leg a short time before in a ditch, and which they had been obliged to kill.

From that time Lise (presently Lison) was considered feeble-minded. The gentle contempt she inspired in her relatives gradually made its way into the minds of all who surrounded her. Little Jeanne herself, with the natural instinct of children, took no

notice of her, never went up to kiss her good-night, never went into her room. Good Rosalie, alone, who gave the room necessary attention, seemed to know where it was situated.

When Aunt Lison entered the dining-room for breakfast, the little one would go up to her from habit and hold up her forehead to be kissed; that was all.

If any one wished to speak to her they sent a servant to call her; and if she was not there they did not bother about her, never thought of her, never thought of troubling themselves so much as to say:

"Why, I have not seen Aunt Lison this morning!"

When they said "Aunt Lison," these two words awakened no feeling of affection in any one's mind. It was as if one had said "the coffee-pot" or "the sugar-bowl."

She always walked with little quick, silent steps, never made a noise, never knocked against anything, and seemed to communicate to surrounding objects the faculty of not making any sound. Her hands seemed to be made of a kind of wadding, she touched everything so lightly and delicately.

She arrived about the middle of July, agitated at the idea of Jeanne's marriage. She brought a quantity of presents which, as they came from her, remained almost unnoticed. On the following day they had forgotten she was there at all.

But an unusual emotion was seething in her mind, and she never took her eyes off the betrothed pair. She interested herself in Jeanne's trousseau with a singular eagerness, a feverish activity, work-

ing like a simple seamstress in her room, where no one came to visit her.

She was continually presenting the Baroness with handkerchiefs she had hemmed herself, towels on which she had embroidered a monogram, saying as she did so: "Is that right, Adelaide?" And the little mother, as she carelessly examined the objects, would reply: "Do not give yourself so much trouble, my poor Lison."

One evening, toward the end of the month, after an oppressively warm day, the moon rose on one of those clear, mild nights which seem to move, stir, and affect one, apparently awakening all the secret poetry of one's soul. The gentle breath of the fields was wafted into the quiet drawing-room. The Baroness and her husband were playing cards by the light of a lamp, and Aunt Lison was sitting beside them knitting; while the young people, leaning on the window-sill, were gazing out at the moonlit garden.

The linden and the plane trees cast their shadow on the lawn, which extended beyond it in the moonlight, as far as the dark wood. Attracted by the tender charm of the night, and by the misty illumination that lighted up the trees and bushes, Jeanne turned toward her parents and said:

"Little father, we are going to take a short stroll on the grass in front of the house."

The Baron replied, without looking up: "Go, my children," and continued his game.

They went out and began to walk slowly along the moonlit lawn as far as the little wood at the end. The hour grew late, and they did not think of going in. The Baroness grew tired, and, wishing to retire, she said:

"We must call the lovers in."

The Baron cast a glance across the spacious garden where the two forms were wandering slowly.

"Let them alone," he said; "it is so delightful outside! Lison will wait for them, will you not, Lison?"

The old maid raised her troubled eyes, and replied in her timid voice:

"Certainly, I will wait for them."

Little father gave his hand to the Baroness, weary himself from the heat of the day.

"I am going to bed, too," he said, and went upstairs with his wife.

Then Aunt Lison rose in her turn, and leaving on the arm of the chair her canvas with the wool and the knitting-needles, she went over and leaned on the window-sill and gazed out at the night.

The lovers kept on walking to and fro between the house and the wood. They pressed each other's fingers without speaking, as if they had left their bodies and formed part of the visible poetry that exhaled from the earth.

Suddenly Jeanne perceived, framed in the window, the silhouette of her aunt, outlined by the light of the lamp behind her.

"See," she said, "there is Aunt Lison looking at us."

The Vicomte raised his head, and said in an indifferent tone without thinking:

"Yes, Aunt Lison is looking at us."

And they continued to dream, to walk slowly, and to love each other. But the dew was falling fast, and the dampness made them shiver a little.

"Let us go in now," said Jeanne.

They went into the house. When they entered

the drawing-room Aunt Lison had gone back to her work. Her head was bent over her knitting, and her fingers were trembling as if she were very tired.

"It is time to go to bed, aunt," said Jeanne, approaching her.

Aunt Lison turned her head, and her eyes were red, as if she had been crying. The young people did not notice it; but suddenly M. de Lamare perceived that Jeanne's thin shoes were covered with dew. He was worried and asked tenderly:

"Are not your dear little feet cold?"

Suddenly the old lady's hands shook so violently that she let fall her knitting, and hiding her face in her hands, she began to sob convulsively.

The betrothed couple looked at her in amazement, without moving. Suddenly Jeanne fell on her knees, and taking her aunt's hands away from her face, said in perplexity:

"Why, what is the matter, Aunt Lison?"

Then the poor woman, her voice full of tears, and her whole body shaking with sorrow, replied:

"It was because he asked you 'Are not your—your—dear little feet cold?'—no one ever said such things to me—to me—never—never!"

Jeanne, surprised and compassionate, could still hardly help laughing at the idea of an admirer showing tender solicitude for Lison; and the Vicomte turned away to conceal his mirth.

But the aunt suddenly rose, leaving her ball of wool on the floor and her knitting in the chair, and fled to her room, feeling her way up the dark staircase.

Left alone, the young people looked at each other, amused and saddened. "Poor aunt!"

Jeanne murmured. "She must be a little crazy this evening," Julien replied.

They held each other's hands, and presently gently exchanged their first kiss; and by the following day had forgotten all about Aunt Lison's tears.

The two weeks preceding the wedding found Jeanne very calm, as if she were weary of tender emotions. She had no time for reflection on the morning of the eventful day. She was conscious only of a feeling as if her flesh, her bones, and her blood had all melted beneath her skin, and on taking hold of anything, she noticed that her fingers trembled.

She did not regain her self-possession until she was in the chancel of the church during the marriage ceremony.

Married! So she was married! And what had occurred since daybreak seemed to her a dream, a waking dream. There are such moments when all appears changed around us; even our motions seem to have a new meaning; even the hours of the day, which seem to be out of their usual time. She felt bewildered—above all else, bewildered. Last evening nothing had as yet been changed in her life; the constant hope of her life seemed only nearer, almost within reach. She had gone to rest a young girl; she was now a married woman. She had crossed that boundary which seems to conceal the future with all its joys, its dreamed-of happiness. She felt as if a door had opened in front of her; she was about to enter into the fulfilment of her expectations.

When they appeared on the threshold of the church after the ceremony, a terrific noise caused

the bride to start in terror and the Baroness to scream: it was a rifle salute given by the peasants, and the firing did not cease until they reached The Poplars.

After a collation served for the family, the family chaplain, and the priest from Yport, the Mayor and the witnesses, who were some of the large farmers of the district, they all walked in the garden. On the other side of the château one could hear the boisterous mirth of the peasants, who were drinking cider beneath the apple trees. The whole countryside, dressed in their best, filled the court-yard.

Jeanne and Julien walked through the copse and then up the slope, and, without speaking, gazed out at the sea. The air was cool, although it was the middle of August; the wind was from the north, and the sun blazed down unpityingly from the blue sky. The young people sought a more sheltered spot; and crossing the plain they turned to the right, toward the rolling and wooded valley that leads to Yport. As soon as they reached the trees the air was still, and they left the road and took a narrow path beneath the trees, where they could hardly walk abreast.

Jeanne felt an arm passed gently round her waist. She said nothing; her breath came quick, her heart beat fast. Some low branches caressed their hair, as they bent to pass under them. She picked a leaf; two ladybirds were concealed beneath it, like two delicate red shells.

"Look, a little family," she said innocently, and feeling a little more confidence.

Julien placed his lips to her ear, and whispered: "This evening you will be my wife!"

Although she had learned many things during her sojourn in the country, she dreamed of nothing as yet but the poetry of love, and was surprised. His wife? Was she not that already?

Then he began to kiss her temples and neck, little light kisses. Startled each time afresh by these masculine kisses, to which she was not accustomed, she instinctively turned away her head to avoid them, though they delighted her. But they had come to the edge of the wood. She stopped, embarrassed at being so far from home. What would the guests think?

"Let us go home," she said.

He withdrew his arm from her waist, and as they turned round they stood face to face, so close that they could feel each other's breath. They gazed deep into one another's eyes with that gaze in which two souls seem to blend. They sought the impenetrable unknown of each other's being. They sought to fathom one another, mutely and persistently. What would they be to each other? What would this life be that they were about to begin together? What joys, what happiness, or what disillusions were they preparing in this long, indissoluble *tête-à-tête* of marriage? It seemed to them as if they had never yet seen each other.

Suddenly Julien, placing his hands on his wife's shoulders, kissed her full on the lips as she had never before been kissed. This kiss, penetrating her very blood and marrow, gave her such a mysterious shock that she pushed Julien wildly away with her arms, almost falling backward as she did so.

"Let us go away! Let us go away!" she faltered.

He did not reply, but took her hands and held them in his. They walked home in silence, and the rest of the afternoon seemed long. The dinner was simple and did not last long, contrary to the usual Norman custom. A sort of embarrassment seemed to paralyze the guests. The two priests, the Mayor, and the four farmers invited alone betrayed a little of that broad mirth which is supposed to accompany weddings.

They had apparently forgotten how to laugh, when a remark of the Mayor's woke them up. It was about nine o'clock; coffee was about to be served. Outside, under the apple trees of the first court, the *bal champêtre* was beginning, and through the open window one could see all that was going on. Lanterns, hung from the branches, gave the leaves a grayish-green tint. Rustics and their partners danced in a circle, shouting a wild dance-tune to the feeble accompaniment of two violins and a clarinet, the players seated on a large table as a platform. The boisterous singing of the peasants at times completely drowned the instruments, and the feeble strains torn to tatters by the unrestrained voices seemed to fall from the air in shreds and fragments of scattered notes.

Two large barrels surrounded by flaming torches were tapped, and two servant-maids were kept busy rinsing glasses and bowls in order to refill them at the tap whence flowed the red wine, or at the tap of the cider-barrel. On the table were bread, sausages, and cheese. Every one swallowed a mouthful from time to time; and beneath the roof of illuminated foliage this wholesome and boisterous *fête* made the melancholy watchers in the dining-room long to dance also, and to drink from one of those large bar-

rels, while they munched a slice of bread and butter and a raw onion.

The Mayor, who was beating time with his knife, cried: "By Jove! that is all very well; it is like the wedding of Ganache."

A suppressed giggle was heard, but Abbé Picot, the natural enemy of civil authority, replied: "You mean of Cana." The other did not accept the correction. "No, Monsieur le curé, I know what I am talking about; when I say Ganache, I mean Ganache."

They rose from table and went into the drawing-room, and then outside to mix with the merrymakers. The guests soon left.

The Baron and the Baroness were disputing in a low voice. Madame Adelaide, more out of breath than ever, seemed to be refusing to do something; at last she said in a louder tone: "No, my dear, I cannot do it; I should not know how to begin."

The Baron, leaving her abruptly, approached Jeanne.

"Will you come with me, daughter?" he said.

"If you wish it, papa," she answered tenderly, and they walked out. A little cold, dry wind was blowing up from the sea, one of those cool summer winds that have a breath of autumn. Clouds were scudding across the sky, hiding the stars at intervals.

The Baron held Jeanne's arm close to his side, while he pressed her hand tenderly. They walked a few minutes. He seemed undecided, embarrassed. At length he said:

"Darling, I am about to undertake a difficult task that should fall to your mother; but as she objects to it I must take her place. I do not know how

much you know of the things of real life. There are mysteries that are carefully hidden from children, young girls especially, young girls who should remain pure in mind, irreproachably pure until the moment we give them over into the arms of the man who is to take charge of their future happiness. It will be his place to lift the veil that conceals the sweet secrets of life. But unless some suspicion has entered their minds they are disgusted at the somewhat brutal reality hidden beneath their dreams. Wounded in sensibilities, they refuse to their husband what the law, human as well as natural, accords him as an absolute right. I cannot tell you any more, dearie; but do not forget this, only this, that you belong entirely to your husband."

What did she know? What did she guess? She began to tremble, oppressed by an overwhelming and painful melancholy, like a presentiment.

They went into the house. They were surprised to see Madame Adelaide sobbing on Julien's shoulder. Her tears, noisy as if blown out by a pair of bellows, seemed to come from her nose, her mouth, and her eyes at the same time; and the young man, dumfounded, awkward, was supporting the heavy woman, who had sunk into his arms to commend to his care her darling, her little one, her adored daughter.

The Baron rushed toward them, saying: "Oh, no scenes, no tears, I beg of you!" and taking his wife to a chair, he made her sit down, while she wiped away her tears. Then, turning to Jeanne: "Come, little one, kiss your mother and go to bed."

Ready to cry herself, Jeanne kissed her parents hurriedly and disappeared.

Aunt Lison had already retired, and the Baron

and his wife were left alone with Julien. They were all so embarrassed that they could find nothing to say, the two men standing up stiffly in their dress clothes, with vacant eyes, and Madame Adelaide sunk in her chair, her throat still full of sobs. The silence became intolerable, and the Baron began to talk of the voyage the young people were to undertake in a few days.

Jeanne, in her room, let herself be undressed by Rosalie, who was in a flood of tears. Her hands were unsteady, and she seemed very much more affected than her mistress. But Jeanne was not thinking about her maid's tears. It seemed to her that she had entered another world, another land, separated from all she had known, all she had loved. Everything appeared upside down in her life and in her mind. The strange idea even occurred to her: "Do I love my husband?" He seemed to her suddenly like a stranger whom she hardly knew. Three months before that she had not known of his existence, and now she was his wife. Why did it happen? Why should one fall suddenly into marriage, as into a hole that opens beneath one's feet?

She crept into bed, and the cold sheets chilled her skin and aggravated the feeling of cold, of solitude, of sadness that had been oppressing her for two hours.

Rosalie vanished, still sobbing. Jeanne awaited anxiously, with a beating heart, this half-guessed secret, told in confused words by her father, this mysterious revelation which is the great secret of love.

She heard three soft knocks on the door. She started violently and did not reply. Another knock and then the knob turned. She hid her head be-

neath the sheet, as if a robber had entered the room. She heard the creaking of shoes on the floor, and then something touching the bed.

She started nervously and gave a little scream; and then, uncovering her head, she saw Julien standing before her, as he looked at her with a smile.

"Oh, how you frightened me!" she said.

"You were not expecting me, then?"

She made no reply. He stood there in evening dress, with his handsome, serious young face, and she was horribly ashamed to be seen in bed by this well-dressed man.

He gently took her hand and kissed it, and kneeling down beside the bed, as beside an altar, he murmured in a tone as light as a breath:

"Will you love me a little?"

Reassured all at once, she raised her head from the lace-covered pillow, and said, smiling:

"I already love you, my friend."

He put her delicate little fingers to his lips and said, in an indistinct tone:

"Will you prove that you love me?"

Remembering her father's words, and again embarrassed, she said, without understanding what it meant:

"I belong to you, my friend."

He covered her wrist with kisses, and, rising slowly to his feet, he bent toward her face, which she covered again.

Suddenly throwing out his arm he clasped his wife through the covers, and, sliding the other hand beneath the pillow, he raised it with her head on it, and very softly he asked: "Then will you not make me a little place beside you?"

She was filled with an instinctive fear, and faltered: "Oh, not yet, please."

He seemed disappointed, rebuffed, and continued, still in a suppliant tone, but more abruptly: "Why later, since it will have to be?"

She was angry at this expression; but, submissive and resigned, she repeated again: "I belong to you, my friend."

He disappeared hastily into the dressing-room, and she heard his movements, the sound of garments being taken off, the clink of money in his pocket, and his shoes falling to the floor.

Suddenly he appeared in underwear and stockings and quickly crossed the room to place his watch on the mantelpiece. He then went back to the dressing-room, where she heard him moving about again. Jeanne turned over on the other side and closed her eyes as she heard him approaching. As she felt the shock of his body gliding against her own she gave a jump as if she would throw herself on the floor; and with her face in her hands, dumfounded and ready to cry with fear and amazement, she retreated to the farther side of the bed.

He took her in his arms, although she had turned her back to him and eagerly kissed her neck, the floating lace around her head, and the collar of her night-robe.

She did not stir, rigid with a horrible fear as she felt a strong hand seeking her bosom, over which her arms were clasped. She breathed quickly, agitated at this brutal contact. She longed to escape, to run through the house and shut herself in somewhere, away from this man.

He was quiet now. She felt the warmth from his body on her back. Her fear was calmed some-

what, and she suddenly thought that she had only to turn over in order to kiss him.

He finally became impatient, and said in a sad tone: "Then you don't wish to be my little wife?"

"Am I not so already?" she murmured behind her hands.

"Why, no, my dear! Come, do not laugh at me!" he replied, with a trace of annoyance in his voice.

The tone disturbed her, and she suddenly turned toward him to ask his pardon. He clasped her frantically in his arms, as if he were starving for her, and covered her with kisses, smothering her with caresses. She had removed her hands from her face and offered no resistance, no longer aware what she was doing, what he was doing, in a maze of troubled thought which dulled her understanding. . . .

What happened then? She could hardly have told, for she seemed to have lost her head, but she felt a shower of little grateful kisses on her lips.

He spoke to her and she replied. Then he became affectionate again, and as she repulsed him she felt against her bosom his flesh that she had felt previously brushing against her, and she started back in horror. He finally ceased entreating her, and lay motionless on his back.

She then began to reflect, and said to herself, filled with despair to the depths of her soul at the disillusion of a delight that she had dreamed would be so different, of a dear hope destroyed, a happiness blasted: "This, then, is what he calls being his wife; that is it! That is it!"

And she lay there some time, disconsolate, her eyes wandering over the tapestry on the walls, the

old love-legend that adorned her room. But as Julien was silent and did not stir, she glanced quietly at him and saw that he was asleep. He was sleeping with his mouth partly open and his face calm! He could sleep!

She could not believe it, feeling more indignant, more insulted at this sleep than at his brutality, to be treated like any chance person! How could he sleep on a night like this? Was what had passed between them nothing strange for him? Oh, she would rather have been struck, treated roughly again, smothered with odious caresses until she fainted! She remained motionless, leaning on her elbow, bending toward him, listening to his breathing through his parted lips, which occasionally became a slight snore.

Day dawned. Julien awoke, yawned, stretched, looked at his wife, smiled, and asked: "Did you sleep well, darling?"

She noticed that he now said "thou," and she replied bewildered: "Why, yes. And you?" "Oh, very well," he answered. And turning toward her he kissed her, and then began to chat quietly. He set before her plans of living with the idea of economy, and this word, occurring several times, astonished Jeanne. She listened without grasping the meaning of his words, looked at him, but was thinking of a thousand things that passed rapidly through her mind, hardly leaving a trace.

The clock struck eight. "Come, we must get up," he said. "It would look ridiculous for us to be late." When he was dressed he assisted his wife with all the little details of her toilet, not allowing her to call Rosalie. As they left the room, he stopped. "You know, when we are alone we can

now use 'thou,' but before your parents it is better to wait a while. It will be quite natural when we come back from our wedding journey."

She did not go down till luncheon was ready. The day passed like any ordinary day, as if nothing new had occurred. There was one man more in the house, that was all.

CHAPTER V

CORSICA AND A NEW LIFE

FOUR days later the traveling-carriage arrived that was to take them to Marseilles.

After the first night Jeanne had become accustomed to Julien's kisses and caresses, although her repugnance to a closer intimacy had not diminished. She thought him handsome, she loved him. She again felt happy and cheerful.

The farewells were short and without sadness. The Baroness alone seemed tearful. As the carriage was starting she placed a purse, heavy as lead, in her daughter's hand, saying: "That is for your little expenses as a bride."

Jeanne thrust the purse in her pocket, and the carriage started.

Toward evening Julien said: "How much money did your mother give you in that purse?"

She had not given it a thought, and she poured out the contents on her knees. A golden shower filled her lap: two thousand francs. She clapped her hands. "I shall commit all kinds of extravagance," she said, as she replaced it in the purse.

After traveling eight days in terribly hot weather they reached Marseilles. The following day the *Roi Louis,* a little mail steamer that went to Naples by way of Ajaccio, took them to Corsica.

Corsica! Its *maquis,* its bandits, its mountains! The birthplace of Napoleon! It seemed to Jeanne that she was leaving real life to enter into a dream, although wide awake. Standing side by side on the bridge of the steamer, they looked at the cliffs of Provence as they passed swiftly by them. The calm sea, of a deep blue, seemed petrified beneath the ardent rays of the sun.

"Do you remember our excursion in Père Lastique's boat?" said Jeanne.

Instead of replying, he gave her a hasty kiss on the ear.

The paddle-wheels struck the water, disturbing its torpor, and a long track of foam, like the froth of champagne, remained in the wake of the boat, reaching as far as the eye could see. Jeanne drank in with delight the odor of the salt mist that seemed to go to the very tips of her fingers. Everywhere the sea. But ahead of them was something gray, not clearly defined in the early dawn; a sort of massing of strange-looking clouds, pointed, jagged, seemed to rest on the waters.

Presently it became clearer, its outline more distinct on the brightening sky; a large chain of mountains, peaked and weird, appeared: it was Corsica, covered with a light veil of mist. The sun rose behind it, outlining the jagged crests like black shadows. Then all the summits were bathed in light, while the rest of the island remained covered with mist.

The captain, a little sunbrowned man, dried up,

stunted, toughened, and shriveled by the harsh salt winds, appeared on the bridge; and in a voice hoarse after twenty years of command, and worn from shouting amid the storms, said to Jeanne:

"Do you detect it, that odor?"

She certainly noticed a strong and peculiar odor of plants, a wild, aromatic odor.

"It is Corsica that sends out that fragrance, Madame," said the captain; "it is her peculiar odor of a pretty woman. After being away for twenty years, I should recognize it five miles out at sea. I belong to it. He, down there, at Saint Helena, he speaks of it always, it seems, as the odor of his native country. He belongs to my family."

And the captain, taking off his hat, saluted Corsica, saluted down yonder, across the ocean, the great captive Emperor who belonged to his family.

Jeanne was so affected that she almost wept.

Then, pointing toward the horizon, the captain said: "*Les Sanguinaires.*"

Julien was standing beside his wife, with his arm round her waist, and they looked into the distance to see to what he was alluding. At length they perceived some pyramidal rocks, which the vessel rounded presently to enter a vast, peaceful gulf surrounded by lofty summits, the base of which was covered with what looked liked moss.

Pointing to this verdant growth, the captain said: "*Le maquis.*"

As they proceeded on their course, the circle of mountains appeared to close in behind the steamer, which moved along slowly in such a lake of transparent azure that one could sometimes see to the bottom.

The town suddenly appeared perfectly white, at the end of the gulf, on the edge of the water, at the base of the mountains. Some little Italian boats were anchored in the dock. Four or five rowboats came up beside the *Roi Louis* to get passengers.

Julien, who was collecting the baggage, asked his wife, in a low tone: "Twenty sous is enough, is it not, to give to the porter?" For a week he had continually asked the same question, which annoyed her each time. She replied somewhat impatiently: "When one is not sure of giving enough, one gives too much."

He was always disputing with the hotel proprietors, with the servants, drivers, vendors of all kinds, and when, by dint of bargaining, he had obtained a reduction in price, he would say to Jeanne, as he rubbed his hands: "I do not like to be cheated."

She trembled whenever a bill came in, certain beforehand of the remarks that he would make about each item, humiliated at this bargaining, blushing to the roots of her hair beneath the contemptuous glances of the servants as they looked after her husband, while they held in their hands the meager tip.

He had a dispute with the boatmen who landed them.

The first tree Jeanne saw was a palm! They went to a great empty hotel at the corner of a large square and ordered breakfast.

After an hour's rest they arranged an itinerary for their trip, and at the end of three days spent in this little town, hidden at the end of the blue gulf, and hot as a furnace inclosed in its curtain of mountains, which keep every breath of air from it, they

decided to hire some saddle-horses, so as to be able to cross any difficult pass; they selected two little Corsican stallions with fiery eyes, thin and unwearying, and set out one morning at daybreak. A guide mounted on a mule accompanied them and carried the provisions, for inns are unknown in that wild country.

The road ran along the gulf and soon turned into a kind of valley, and went toward the high mountains. They frequently crossed the dry beds of torrents with only a tiny stream of water trickling under the stones, gurgling faintly like a wild animal in hiding.

The uncultivated country seemed perfectly barren. The sides of the hills were covered with tall weeds, yellow from the blazing sun. Sometimes they met a mountaineer, either on foot or mounted on a little horse, or astride a donkey about as big as a dog. They all carried a loaded rifle slung across their backs, old rusty weapons, but redoubtable in their hands.

The pungent odor of the aromatic herbs with which the island is overgrown seemed to make the air heavy. The road ascended gradually amid the long curves of the mountains. The red or blue granite peaks gave an appearance of fairyland to the wild landscape, and on the foothills great forests of chestnut trees looked like green brush, compared with the elevations above them.

Sometimes the guide, reaching out his hand toward some of these heights, would repeat a name. Jeanne and Julien would look where he pointed, but see nothing, until at last they discovered something gray, like a mass of stones fallen from the summit. It was a little village, a hamlet of granite

hanging there, fastened on like a veritable birds'-nest, and almost invisible on the huge mountain.

Walking their horses like this made Jeanne nervous. "Let us go faster," she said. And she whipped up her horse. Then, as she did not hear her husband following her, she turned round and laughed heartily as she saw him coming along, pale, and holding to his horse's mane as it bounced him up and down. His very appearance of a *beau cavalier* made his awkwardness and timidity all the more comical.

They trotted along quietly. The road now ran between two interminable forests of brush which covered the whole side of the mountain like a garment. This was the *maquis,* composed of scrub oak, juniper, arbutus, mastic, privet, gorse, laurel, myrtle, and boxwood, intertwined with clematis, huge ferns, honeysuckle, cytisus, rosemary, lavender, and brambles, which covered the sides of the mountain with an impenetrable fleece.

They were hungry. The guide rejoined them and led them to one of those charming springs so common in rocky countries, a tiny thread of icy water, issuing from a little hole in the rock, and flowing into a chestnut leaf that some passer-by had placed there to guide the water into one's mouth.

Jeanne felt so happy that she could hardly restrain herself from crying out for joy.

They continued their journey and began to descend the slope, winding round the Bay of Sagone. Toward evening they passed through Cargese, the Greek village founded by a colony of refugees who were driven from their country. Tall, beautiful girls, with rounded hips, long hands, and slender

waists, and singularly graceful, were grouped beside a fountain. Julien called out " Good evening! " and they replied in musical tones in the harmonious language of their own land.

When they reached Piana they had to beg for hospitality, as in ancient times and in desert lands. Jeanne trembled with joy as they waited for the door to be opened after Julien knocked. Oh, this was a journey worth while, with all the unexpectedness of unexplored paths!

It happened to be the home of a young couple, who received the travelers as the patriarchs must have received the guest sent by God. They had to sleep on a corn-husk mattress, in an old moldy house. The worm-eaten woodwork, overrun with long boring-worms, seemed to emit sounds, to be alive, and to sigh.

They set off again at daybreak, and presently stopped before a forest, a veritable forest of purple granite. There were peaks, pillars, bell-towers, wondrous forms molded by age, the ravaging wind, and the sea mist. Some of them as much as three hundred meters in height, slender, round, twisted, hooked, deformed, unexpected and fantastic, these amazing rocks looked like trees, plants, animals, monuments, men, monks in their garb, horned devils, gigantic birds, a whole population of monsters, a menagerie of nightmares petrified by the will of some eccentric divinity.

Jeanne had ceased talking; her heart was full. She took Julien's hand and pressed it, overcome with a longing for love, in presence of the beauty of nature.

Suddenly, as they emerged from this chaos, they saw before them another gulf, encircled by a wall

of blood-red granite, the red rocks being reflected in the blue waters.

"Oh, Julien!" faltered Jeanne, unable to speak for wonder, and choking with emotion. Two tears fell from her eyes. Julien gazed at her in astonishment, and said:

"What is the matter, my pet?"

She wiped away her tears, smiled, and replied in a rather shaky voice:

"Nothing—I am nervous—I do not know—it just came over me. I am so happy that the least thing affects me."

He could not understand these feminine attacks of "nerves," the shocks of these vibrant beings, excited at nothing, whom enthusiasm stirs as might a catastrophe, whom an imperceptible sensation completely upsets, driving them wild with joy or despair.

These tears seemed absurd to him, and, thinking only of the bad road, he said:

"You would do better to keep your eyes on your horse."

They descended an almost impassable path to the shore of the gulf, then turned to the right to ascend the gloomy Val d'Ota.

But the road was so bad that Julien proposed that they should go on foot. Jeanne was delighted. She was enchanted at the idea of walking, of being alone with him after her late emotion.

The guide went ahead with the mule and the horses, and they walked slowly.

The mountain, cleft from top to bottom, spreads apart. The path lies in this breach, between two gigantic walls. A roaring torrent flows through the gorge. The air is icy, the granite looks black, and

high above the glimpse of blue sky astonishes and bewilders one.

A sudden noise made Jeanne start. She raised her eyes. A great bird flew away from a hollow; it was an eagle. His spreading wings seemed to brush the two walls of the gorge, and he soared into the blue and disappeared.

Farther on was a double gorge, and the path lay between the two in abrupt zigzags. Jeanne, careless and happy, took the lead, the pebbles rolling away beneath her feet, and she, fearless, leaned over the abysses. Julien followed her, somewhat out of breath, his eyes fixed on the ground for fear of becoming dizzy.

Suddenly the sun shone down on them, and it seemed as if they were leaving the infernal regions. They were thirsty, and following a track of moisture they crossed a wilderness of stones and found a little spring conducted into a channel made of a piece of hollowed wood, for the benefit of the goatherds. A carpet of moss covered the ground all round it, and Jeanne and Julien knelt down to drink.

As they were enjoying the fresh cold water, Julien tried to draw Jeanne away to tease her. She resisted and their lips met and parted; the stream of cold water splashed their faces, their necks, their clothes, and their hands, and their kisses mingled in the stream.

They were a long time reaching the summit of the declivity, as the road was so winding and uneven, and they did not reach Evisa until evening, arriving at the house of Paoli Palabretti, a relative of their guide.

He was a tall man, somewhat bent, with the

mournful air of a consumptive. He took them to their room, a cheerless room of bare stone, but handsome for that country, where all elegance is ignored. He expressed in his language—the Corsican *patois,* a jumble of French and Italian—his pleasure at welcoming them, when a shrill voice interrupted them. A little swarthy woman, with large black eyes, a skin warmed by the sun, a slender waist, teeth always showing in a perpetual smile, darted forward, kissed Jeanne, shook Julien's hand, and said: "Good day, Madame, good day, Monsieur; I hope you are well."

She took their hats and wraps, carrying all on one arm, for the other was in a sling, and then she made them all go outside, saying to her husband: "Go and take them for a walk until dinner-time."

M. Palabretti obeyed at once, and walked between the two young people as he showed them the village. He dragged his feet and his words, coughing frequently, and repeating at each attack of coughing:

"It is the air of the Val, which is cool, and has struck my chest."

He led them on a by-path beneath enormous chestnut trees. Suddenly he stopped, and said in his monotonous voice: "It is here that my cousin, Jean Rinaldi, was killed by Mathieu Lori. See, I was there, close to Jean, when Mathieu appeared at ten paces from us. 'Jean,' he cried, 'do not go to Albertacce; do not go, Jean, or I will kill you, I warn you.'

"I took Jean's arm: 'Don't go there, Jean; he will do it.'

"It was about a girl whom they were both after, Pauline Sinacoupi.

"But Jean cried out: 'I am going, Mathieu; you will not be the one to prevent me.'

"Then Mathieu unslung his gun, and before I could adjust mine, he fired.

"Jean leaped two feet in the air, like a child skipping, yes, Monsieur, and he fell back full on me, so that my gun went off, and rolled as far as the big chestnut tree over yonder.

"Jean's mouth was wide open, but he did not utter a word; he was dead."

The young people gazed in amazement at the calm witness of this crime. Jeanne asked:

"And what became of the assassin?"

Paoli Palabretti had a long fit of coughing, and then said:

"He escaped to the mountain. It was my brother who killed him the following year. You know, my brother, Philippi Palabretti, the bandit."

Jeanne shuddered:

"Your brother—a bandit?"

With a gleam of pride in his eye, the calm Corsican replied:

"Yes, Madame. He was celebrated, that one. He laid low six gendarmes. He died at the same time as Nicolas Morali, when they were trapped in the Niolo, after six days of fighting, and were about to die of hunger.

"The country is worth it," he added, with a resigned air, in the same tone in which he said: "It is the air of the Val, which is cool."

Then they went home to dinner, and the little Corsican woman behaved as if she had known them for twenty years.

But Jeanne was worried. When Julien again held her in his arms, would she experience the same

strange and intense sensation that she had felt on the moss beside the spring? And when they were alone together that evening she trembled lest she should still be insensible to his kisses. But she was reassured, and this was her first night of love.

The next day, as they were about to set out, she decided that she would not leave this humble cottage, where it seemed as if a fresh happiness had begun for her.

She called her host's little wife into her room and, while making it clear that she did not mean it as a present, she insisted, even with some annoyance, on sending her from Paris, as soon as she should arrive there, a remembrance—a remembrance to which she attached an almost superstitious significance.

The little Corsican refused for some time, not wishing to accept it. But at last she consented, saying:

"Well, then, send me a little pistol, a very small one."

Jeanne opened her eyes in astonishment. The other added in her ear, as one confides a sweet and intimate secret: "It is to kill my brother-in-law." And, smiling, she hastily unwound the bandages around the helpless arm, and showing her firm, white skin with the scratch of a stiletto across it, now almost healed, she said: "If I had not been almost as strong as he, he would have killed me. My husband is not jealous, he knows me; and, besides, he is ill, you know, and that quiets your blood. And, besides, Madame, I am an honest woman; but my brother-in-law believes all that he hears. He is jealous for my husband, and he will

surely try it again. Then I shall have my little pistol; I shall be easy and sure of my revenge."

Jeanne promised to send the weapon, kissed her new friend tenderly, and they set out on their journey.

The rest of the trip was nothing but a dream, a continual series of embraces, an intoxication of caresses. She saw nothing, neither the landscape, nor the people, nor the places where they stopped. She saw nothing but Julien.

On arriving at Bastia they had to pay the guide. Julien fumbled in his pockets. Not finding what he wanted, he said to Jeanne: "As you are not using your mother's two thousand francs, give them to me to carry. They will be safer in my belt, and it will avoid my having to make change."

She handed him her purse.

They went to Leghorn, visited Florence, Genoa, and all the Cornici. They reached Marseilles on a morning when the north wind was blowing. Two months had elapsed since they left The Poplars. It was now the fifteenth of October.

Jeanne, affected by the cold wind that seemed to come from yonder, from far-off Normandy, felt sad. Julien had, for some time, appeared changed, tired, indifferent; and she feared she knew not what.

They delayed their return home four days longer, not being able to make up their minds to leave this pleasant land of the sun. It seemed to her that she had come to the end of her happiness.

At length they left. They were to make all their purchases in Paris, prior to settling down permanently at The Poplars; and Jeanne looked forward to bringing back some treasures, thanks to her

mother's present. But the first thing she thought of was the pistol promised to the little Corsican woman of Evisa.

The day after they arrived she said to Julien: "Dear, will you give me that money of mamma's, as I wish to make my purchases."

He turned toward her with a look of annoyance.

"How much do you want?"

"Why—whatever you please."

"I will give you a hundred francs," he replied, "but do not squander it."

She did not know what to say, amazed and confused. At length she faltered: "But—I—handed you the money to——"

He did not give her time to finish.

"Yes, of course. Whether it is in my pocket or in yours makes no difference, from the moment that we have the same purse. I do not refuse you, do I, since I am giving you a hundred francs?"

She took the five gold pieces without a word; but she did not venture to ask for any more, and she bought nothing but the pistol.

Eight days later they set out for The Poplars.

CHAPTER VI

DISENCHANTMENT

THE family and servants were awaiting them outside the white gate with the brick supports. The post-chaise drew up, and there were long and affectionate greetings. Little mother wept; Jeanne, affected, wiped away some tears; the father nervously walked up and down.

Then, as the baggage was being unloaded, they told of their travels beside the parlor fire. Jeanne's words flowed freely, and everything was told, everything, in a half hour, except, perhaps, a few little details forgotten in this rapid account.

The young wife then went to undo her parcels. Rosalie, also greatly affected, assisted her. When this was finished and everything had been put away, the little maid left her mistress, and Jeanne, somewhat fatigued, sat down.

She asked herself what she was to do now, seek-

ing some occupation for her mind, some work for her hands. She did not care to go down again into the drawing-room where her mother was asleep, and she thought she would take a walk. But the country seemed so sad that she felt a weight at her heart only to look out of the window.

Then it came to her that she had no longer anything to do, never again anything to do. All her young life at the convent had been preoccupied with the future, busied with dreams. The constant excitement of hope filled her hours at that time, so that she was not aware of their flight. Then, hardly had she left those austere walls where her illusions had unfolded, when her expectations of love were at once realized. The longed-for lover met, loved, and married within a few weeks, as one marries on these sudden resolves, had carried her off in his arms, without giving her time for reflection.

But now the sweet reality of the first days was to become the everyday reality, which closed the door on vague hopes, on the enchanting restlessness of the unknown. Yes, there was nothing more to look forward to. And there was nothing more to do to-day, to-morrow, forever. She felt all this vaguely as a certain disillusion, a certain crumbling of her dreams.

She rose and leaned her forehead against the cold window-panes.

Then, after gazing for some time at the sky, across which dark clouds were passing, she decided to go out.

Was this the same country, the same grass, the same trees as in May? What had become of the sunlit cheerfulness of the leaves and the poetry of the green grass, where dandelions, poppies, and

moonlike daisies bloomed, and where yellow butterflies fluttered as if on invisible wires? That intoxication of the air teeming with life, with fragrance, with fertilizing pollen, existed no longer!

The avenues, soaked by the constant autumnal downpours, were covered with a thick carpet of fallen leaves, and extended beneath the shivering bareness of the almost leafless poplars. She went as far as the shrubbery. It was as sad as the chamber of a dying person. The green hedge that separated the little winding walks was bare of leaves. Birds flew from place to place with a little chilly cry, seeking a shelter.

The thick curtain of elm trees that formed a protection against sea wind, the lime tree and the plane tree, with their crimson and yellow tints, seemed clothed, the one in red velvet and the other in yellow silk.

Jeanne walked slowly up and down her mother's avenue, alongside the Couillard farm. Something weighed on her spirit like a presentiment of the long boredom of the monotonous life about to begin.

She seated herself on the bank where Julien had first told her of his love, and remained there, dreaming, hardly thinking, depressed to the very soul, longing to lie down, to sleep, in order to escape the dreariness of the day.

Presently she perceived a gull crossing the sky, carried away in a gust of wind; and she recalled the eagle she had seen in Corsica, in the gloomy vale of Ota. She felt a spasm at her heart, as at the remembrance of something pleasant that is gone by, and she had a sudden vision of the beautiful island with its wild perfume, its sun that ripens oranges and lemons, its mountains with their rosy

summits, its azure gulfs, and its ravines through which the torrents flowed.

And the moist, severe landscape that surrounded her, with falling leaves and gray clouds blown along by the wind, enfolded her in such a heavy mantle of misery that she went back to the house to keep from sobbing.

Her mother was dozing in a torpid condition in front of the fire, accustomed to the melancholy of the long days, and not noticing it any more. Her father and Julien had gone for a walk to talk about business matters. Night was coming on, filling the large drawing-room with gloom, dimly lighted by reflections from the fire.

The Baron presently appeared, followed by Julien. As soon as the Vicomte entered the room he rang the bell, saying: "Quick, quick, let us have some light! It is gloomy in here."

The Baron sat down before the fire. While his wet shoes were steaming in the warmth and the mud was drying on his soles, he rubbed his hands cheerfully as he said: "I think it is going to freeze; the sky is clearing in the north, and it is full moon to-night; we shall have a frost to-night."

Then, turning to his daughter: "Well, little one, are you glad to be back again in your own country, in your own home, with the old folks?"

This simple question upset Jeanne. She threw herself into her father's arms, her eyes full of tears, and kissed him nervously, as if asking pardon; for, in spite of her honest attempt to be cheerful, she felt sad enough to give up altogether. She recalled the joy she had promised herself at seeing her parents again, and she was surprised at the coldness that seemed to numb her affection; just as if, after

constantly thinking of those one loves, when at a distance and unable to see them at any moment, one should feel, on seeing them again, a sort of check of affection, until the bonds of their life in common had been renewed.

Dinner lasted a long time. No one spoke much. Julien appeared to have forgotten his wife.

In the drawing-room Jeanne sat before the fire in a drowsy condition, opposite the little mother, who was sound asleep. Aroused by the voices of the men, Jeanne asked herself, as she tried to rouse herself, if she, too, was to become a slave to this dreary lethargy of habit, that nothing varies.

The Baron approached the fire, and holding out his hands to the glowing flame, he said, smiling: "Ah, that burns finely this evening. It is freezing, children, it is freezing." Then, placing his hand on Jeanne's shoulder and pointing to the fire, he said: "See here, little daughter, that is the best thing in life, the hearth, the hearth, with one's own around one. Nothing else counts. But suppose we retire? You children must be tired out."

When she was in her room Jeanne asked herself how she could feel so differently on returning a second time to the place that she thought she loved. Why did she feel as if she were wounded; why did this house, this beloved country, all that hitherto had thrilled her with happiness, now appear so distressing?

Her eyes suddenly fell on her clock. The little bee was still swinging from left to right, from right to left, with the same quick, continuous motion, above the scarlet blossoms. Suddenly an impulse of tenderness moved her to tears at sight of this little piece of mechanism that seemed to be alive. She

had not been so affected on kissing her father and mother. The heart has mysteries that no arguments can solve.

For the first time since her marriage she was to sleep alone, Julien, under pretext of fatigue, having taken another room.

She lay awake a long time, unaccustomed to being alone, and disturbed by the bleak north wind which beat against the roof.

She was awakened the next morning by a bright light that flooded her room. She put on a dressing-gown and ran to the window and opened it.

An icy breeze, sharp and bracing, streamed into the room, making her skin tingle and her eyes water. The sun appeared behind the trees on a crimson sky, and the earth, covered with frost, dry and hard, rang out beneath the footsteps. In one night all the leaves had blown off the trees, and in the distance, beyond the level ground, was seen the long green line of water, covered with trails of white foam.

Jeanne dressed herself and went out, and for the sake of an object she went to call on the farmers.

The Martins held up their hands in surprise, and Madame Martin kissed her on both cheeks, and they made her drink a glass of *noyau*. She then went to the other farm. The Couillards also were surprised. Madame Couillard pecked her on the ears, and she had to drink a glass of *cassis*. Then she went home to breakfast.

The day went by like the previous day, cold instead of damp. And the other days of the week resembled these two days; and all the weeks of the month were like the first week.

Little by little, however, she ceased to regret far-off lands. The force of habit was covering her life

with a layer of resignation similar to the limestone formation deposited on objects by certain springs. And a kind of interest in the thousand and one little insignificant things of daily life, a care for the simple, ordinary, everyday occupations, awakened in her heart. A sort of pensive melancholy, a vague disenchantment with life, was growing in her mind. What did she lack? What did she want? She did not know. She had no worldly desires; no thirst for amusement, no longing for permissible pleasures. What then? Just as old furniture tarnishes in time so everything was slowly becoming faded to her eyes, everything seemed to be fading, to be taking on pale, dreary shades.

Her relations with Julien had completely changed. He seemed to be quite different since they came back from their honeymoon, like an actor who has played his part and resumes his ordinary manner. He paid hardly any attention to her, or even spoke to her. All trace of love had suddenly disappeared, and he seldom came into her room at night.

He had taken charge of the money and of the house, changed the leases, worried the peasants, cut down expenses; and having adopted the costume of a gentleman farmer, he had lost the polish and elegance that had characterized him as her betrothed.

He always wore the same suit, although it was covered with spots. It was an old velveteen shooting-jacket with brass buttons, which he had found among his former wardrobe, and, with the carelessness that is frequent with those who no longer seek to please, he had given up shaving, and his long beard, badly cut, made an incredible change for the worse in his appearance. His hands never were

cared for; and after each meal he drank four or five glasses of brandy.

Jeanne tried to remonstrate with him gently, but he had answered her so abruptly: "Won't you let me alone?" that she never ventured to give him any more advice.

She had adapted herself to these changes in a manner that surprised herself. He had become a stranger to her—a stranger whose mind and heart were closed to her. She constantly thought about it, asking herself how it was that having met, loved, married in an impulse of affection, they should all at once find themselves almost as much strangers as if they never had shared the same room.

And how was it that she did not feel this neglect more deeply? Was this life? Had they deceived themselves? Did the future hold nothing further for her?

If Julien had remained handsome, carefully dressed, elegant, she might have suffered more deeply.

It had been agreed that after the new year the young couple should remain alone, and that the father and mother should go back to spend a few months at their house in Rouen. The young people were not to leave The Poplars that winter, in order to become thoroughly settled and become accustomed to each other, and to the place where all their life would be passed. They had a few neighbors, to whom Julien would introduce his wife. These were the Brisevilles, the Couteliers, and the Fournvilles.

But the young people could not begin to pay calls because they had not as yet been able to get a painter to alter the armorial bearings on the carriage.

The old family coach had been given up to his son-in-law by the Baron; and nothing would have induced him to show himself at the neighboring château if the coat-of-arms of the De Lamares were not quartered with those of the Le Perthuis des Vauds.

There was only one man in the district who made a specialty of heraldic designs, a painter of Bolbec, called Bataille, who was in demand at all the Norman castles in turn to make these precious designs on the doors of carriages.

At length, one morning in December, just as they were finishing breakfast, they saw a man open the gate and walk toward the house. He was carrying a box on his back. This was Bataille.

They offered him some breakfast, and, while he was eating, the Baron and Julien made sketches of quarterings. The Baroness, much moved as soon as these things were discussed, gave her opinion. And even Jeanne took part in the discussion, as if some mysterious interest had suddenly awakened in her.

Bataille, while eating, gave his ideas, at times taking the pencil and tracing a design, citing examples, describing all the aristocratic carriages in the countryside; he seemed to have brought with him in his ideas, even in his voice, a sort of atmosphere of aristocracy.

As soon as he had finished his coffee they all went to the coach-house. They took the cover off the carriage and Bataille examined it. He then gravely gave his views as to the size he considered suitable for the design, and after an exchange of ideas he set to work.

Notwithstanding the cold, the Baroness had her chair brought out so as to watch him working, and

then her foot-stove, for her feet were freezing. She began to chat with the painter, on all the recent births, deaths, and marriages of which she had not heard, thus adding to the genealogical tree she carried in her memory.

Julien sat beside her, astride on a chair. He was smoking, spitting on the ground, listening, and following with his glances the emblazoning of his rank.

Presently old Simon, who was on his way to the vegetable garden, his spade on his shoulder, stopped to look at the work; and as Bataille's arrival had become known at the two farms, the farmers' wives soon put in an appearance. They went into raptures, standing one at either side of the Baroness, exclaiming: "Well, it requires some cleverness, all the same, to fix up those things."

The two doors could not be finished before the next day about eleven o'clock. Every one was on hand; and they dragged the carriage outside so as to get a better view of it.

It was perfect. Bataille was complimented, and departed with his box on his back. They all agreed that the painter had great ability, and if circumstances had been favorable would doubtless have been a fine artist.

Julien, by way of economy, had introduced great reforms, which necessitated making some changes. The old coachman had been made gardener, Julien undertaking to drive himself, having sold the carriage horses to avoid buying feed for them. But, as it was necessary to have some one to hold the horses when he and his wife got out of the carriage, he had made a little cow-tender named Marius into a groom. Then, in order to obtain some horses, he

introduced a special clause into the Couillard and Martin leases, by which they were bound to supply a horse each, on a certain day every month, the date to be fixed by him; and this would exempt them from their tribute of poultry.

So the Couillards brought a big yellow horse, and the Martins a small white animal with long unclipped coat, and the two were harnessed together. Marius, buried in an ancient livery belonging to old Simon, led the carriage up to the front door.

Julien, now clean and brushed up, looked a little like his former self; but his long beard gave him a common appearance in spite of all. He examined the horses, the carriage, and the little groom, and seemed satisfied, the only really important thing to him being the newly painted escutcheon.

The Baroness came down leaning on her husband's arm and got into the carriage. Then Jeanne appeared. She began to laugh at the horses, saying that the white one was the son of the yellow horse; then she perceived Marius, his face buried under his hat with its cockade, his nose alone preventing it from covering his face altogether, his hands hidden in the long sleeves, and the tail of his coat forming a skirt round his legs, his feet incased in immense shoes showing in a comical manner beneath it; when he threw his head back so as to see and lifted up his leg to walk as if he were crossing a river, she burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

The Baron turned round, glanced at the bewildered little groom, and he, too, burst out laughing, calling to his wife: "Look at Ma-Ma-Marius! Is he not comical? Heavens, how funny he looks!"

The Baroness, looking out of the carriage win-

dow, was also convulsed, so that the carriage shook on its springs.

But Julien, pale with anger, asked: "Why do you laugh like that? Are you crazy?"

Jeanne, quite convulsed and unable to stop laughing, sat down on the doorstep; the Baron did the same; while, in the carriage, spasmodic sneezes, a sort of constant chuckling, told that the Baroness was choking. Presently there was a motion beneath Marius's livery. He, too, had doubtless understood the joke, for he was shaking with laughter beneath his hat.

Julien darted forward in exasperation. With a box on the ear, he sent the boy's hat flying across the lawn; then, turning toward his father-in-law, he stammered in a voice trembling with rage: "It seems to me that you should be the last to laugh. We should not be where we are now if you had not wasted your money and ruined your property. Whose fault is it if you are ruined?"

The laughter ceased at once, and no one spoke. Jeanne, now ready to cry, got into the carriage and sat beside her mother. The Baron, silent and astonished, took his place opposite the two ladies, and Julien sat on the box, after lifting to the seat beside him the weeping boy, whose face was beginning to swell.

The road was dreary and appeared long. The occupants of the carriage were silent. All three sad and embarrassed, they would not acknowledge to one another what was occupying their thoughts. They felt that they could not talk on indifferent subjects while these thoughts had possession of them, and preferred to remain silent rather than allude to this painful subject.

They drove past farmyards, the carriage jogging along unevenly with the ill-matched animals, putting to flight terrified black hens, which plunged into the bushes and disappeared, occasionally followed by a barking wolf-hound.

At length they entered a wide avenue of pine trees, at the end of which was a closed white gate. Marius ran to open it, and they drove in round a large grass-plot, drawing up before a high, spacious, sad-looking building with closed shutters.

The hall door opened abruptly, and an old, paralyzed servant, wearing a black waistcoat with red stripes partially covered by his working apron, slowly descended the slanting steps. He took the visitors' names and led them into a spacious reception-room, opening with difficulty the venetian blinds, which were always kept closed. The furniture had covers on it, and the clock and candelabra were wrapped in white muslin. An atmosphere of mildew, an atmosphere of former days, damp and icy, seemed to permeate one's lungs, heart, and skin with melancholy.

They sat down and waited. They heard steps in the hall above them that betokened unaccustomed haste. The hosts were hurriedly dressing. The Baroness, who was chilled, sneezed constantly. Julien paced up and down. Jeanne, despondent, sat beside her mother. The Baron leaned against the marble mantelpiece with his head bent.

Finally one of the tall doors opened, and the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Briseville appeared. Both were small, thin, vivacious, of no age in particular, ceremonious and embarrassed.

After the first greetings, there seemed to be nothing to say. So they began to congratulate each

other for no special reason, and hoped that these friendly relations would be kept up. It was a treat to see people when one lived in the country the year round.

The icy atmosphere pierced to their bones and made their voices hoarse. The Baroness was coughing now, and had stopped sneezing. The Baron thought it was time to leave. The Brisevilles said: "What, so soon? Stay a little longer." But Jeanne had risen in spite of Julien's signals, for he thought the visit too short.

They attempted to ring for the servant to order the carriage, but the bell would not ring. The host went himself to attend to it, but found that the horses had been put in the stable.

They had to wait. Every one tried to think of something to say. Jeanne, involuntarily shivering with cold, inquired what their hosts did to occupy themselves all the year round. The Brisevilles were much astonished; for they were always busy, either writing letters to their aristocratic relations, of whom they had a number scattered all over France, or attending to microscopic duties, as ceremonious to one another as if they were strangers, and talking grandiloquently of the most trifling matters.

At last the carriage passed the windows with its ill-matched team. But Marius had disappeared. Thinking he was off duty until evening, he had doubtless gone for a walk.

Julien, perfectly furious, begged them to send him home on foot, and after a great many farewells on both sides they set out for The Poplars.

As soon as they were inside the carriage, Jeanne and her father, in spite of Julien's brutal behavior of the morning, which still weighed on their

minds, began to laugh at the gestures and intonations of the Brisevilles. The Baron imitated the husband, and Jeanne the wife. But the Baroness, a little touchy in these matters, said: "You are wrong to ridicule them thus; they are people of excellent family."

They were silent out of respect for the little mother, but, nevertheless, from time to time, Jeanne and her father began again. The Baroness could not forbear smiling in her turn, but she repeated: "It is not nice to laugh at people who belong to our class."

Suddenly the carriage stopped, and Julien called out to some one behind it. Then Jeanne and the Baron, leaning out, saw a singular creature that appeared to be rolling along toward them. His legs were entangled in his flowing coat-tails, and, blinded by his hat, which kept falling over his face, shaking his sleeves like the sails of a windmill, splashing into puddles of water, and stumbling against stones in the road, running and bounding, behold, it was Marius following the carriage as fast as his legs could carry him.

As soon as he caught up with it, Julien, leaning over, seized him by the collar of his coat, sat him down beside him, and letting go the reins, began to shower blows on the boy's hat, which sank down to his shoulders with reverberations like a drum. The boy screamed, tried to get away, to jump from the carriage, while his master, holding him with one hand, continued beating him with the other.

Jeanne, dumfounded, stammered: "Father—oh, father!" And the Baroness, wild with indignation, squeezed her husband's arm.

"Stop him!" she exclaimed.

The Baron quickly lowered the front window, and, seizing his son-in-law's sleeve, he sputtered, in a voice trembling with rage: "Have you almost finished beating that child?"

Julien turned round in astonishment: "Don't you see what a condition his livery is in?"

But the Baron, thrusting his head between them, said: "Well, what do I care? There is no need to be brutal like that!"

Julien grew angry again: "Let me alone, please! this is not your affair!" And he was raising his hand again, when his father-in-law caught it and dragged it down so roughly that he knocked it against the side of the seat, while he roared: "If you do not stop, I shall get out, and I myself will see that you stop it." Julien became calm at once, and shrugging his shoulders without replying, he whipped up the horses, which set out at a quick trot.

The two women, pale as death, did not stir, and one could hear distinctly the thumping of the Baroness's heart.

At dinner Julien was more charming than usual, as if nothing unusual had occurred. Jeanne, her father, and Madame Adelaide, pleased to see him so amiable, fell in with his mood, and when Jeanne mentioned the Brisevilles he laughed at them himself, adding, however: "All the same, they have the grand air."

They made no more visits, each one fearing to revive the Marius episode. They decided to send New Year's cards, and to wait until the first warm days of spring before paying any more calls.

At Christmas they invited the *curé* and the Mayor with his wife to dinner, and again on New Year's Day. These were the only events that varied

the monotony of their life. The Baron and his wife were to leave The Poplars on the ninth of January. Jeanne wished to keep them, but Julien did not acquiesce; and the Baron sent for a post-chaise from Rouen, seeing his son-in-law's coolness.

The day before their departure, as it was clear, frosty weather, Jeanne and her father decided to go to Yport, which they had not visited since her return from Corsica. They crossed the wood where she had strolled on her wedding-day, wrapped in the thought of the one whose lifelong companion she had become; the wood where she had received her first kiss, trembled at the first breath of love, had a presentiment of physical love of which she did not become fully aware until she was in the wild vale of Ota, beside the spring where they mingled their kisses as they drank of its waters. The trees were now leafless, the climbing vines dead.

They entered the little village. The empty, silent streets smelled of the sea, of wrack, of fish. Huge brown nets were still hanging up to dry outside the houses, or stretched out on the shingle. The gray, cold sea, with its eternal roaring foam, was at ebb tide, uncovering the green rocks at the foot of the cliff facing Fécamp.

Jeanne and her father, motionless, watched the fishermen setting out in their boats in the dusk, as they did every night, risking their lives to keep from starving, and so poor, nevertheless, that they never tasted meat.

The Baron, inspired at sight of the ocean, murmured: "It is terrible, but it is beautiful. How magnificent is this sea on which the darkness is falling, and on which so many lives are in peril, is it not, Jeannette?"

She replied with a cold smile: "It is nothing to the Mediterranean."

Her father, indignant, exclaimed: "The Mediterranean! That is oil, sugar-water, bluing water in a washtub. Look at this sea, how terrible it is with its crests of foam! And think of all those men who have set out on it, and who are already out of sight."

Jeanne assented with a sigh: "Yes, if you think so." But that name "Mediterranean" had wrung her heart afresh, sending her thoughts back to those distant lands where her dreams lay buried.

Instead of returning home through the woods, they walked along the road, mounting the ascent slowly. They were silent, sad at the thought of the approaching separation. As they passed along beside the farmyards, an odor of crushed apples, that smell of new cider which seems to pervade the atmosphere in this season throughout Normandy, rose to their nostrils, or else a strong smell of the cow-stables. A small, lighted window at the end of the yard indicated the farmhouse.

It seemed to Jeanne that her mind was expanding and beginning to understand the psychic meaning of things; and these little scattered gleams in the landscape gave her, all at once, a keen sense of the isolation of all human lives, a feeling that everything detaches, separates, draws one far away from the things they love.

She said, in a resigned tone: "Life is not always cheerful."

The Baron sighed: "How can it be helped, daughter? We can do nothing."

The following day the Baron and his wife departed, and Jeanne and Julien were left alone.

CHAPTER VII

JEANNE'S DISCOVERY

CARDS now became a distraction in the life of the young couple. Every morning after breakfast Julien would play several games of bézique with his wife, smoking and sipping brandy as he played. She would then go up to her room and sit beside the window, and as the rain beat against the panes, or the wind shook the casement, she would embroider steadily. Occasionally she would raise her eyes and look out at the gray sea, with its white-caps. After gazing listlessly for some time, she would resume her work.

She had nothing else to do, as Julien had taken the entire management of the house, to satisfy his craving for authority and his craze for economy. He was parsimonious in the extreme, never gave any tips, cut down the food to the merest necessaries; and though Jeanne, since her return, had ordered the baker to make her a little Norman *galette* for breakfast, he cut down this extra expense and condemned her to eat toast.

She said nothing in order to avoid recriminations, arguments, and quarrels; but she suffered keenly at each fresh manifestation of avarice on the part of her husband. It appeared to her low and odious, brought up as she had been in a family where money never was considered. How often had she not heard her mother say: "Why, money is made to be spent." Julien would now say: "Will you ever learn not to throw money away?" And every time he deducted a few sous from some one's salary, or on the payment of a note, he would say with a smile, as he slipped the change into his pocket: "Little streams make big rivers."

On certain days Jeanne sat and dreamed. She would gradually cease sewing, and, with her hands idle, and forgetting her surroundings, would weave one of those romances of her girlhood and be lost in some enchanting adventure. But suddenly Julien's voice giving some orders to old Simon would snatch her abruptly from her dreams, and she would take up her work again, saying: "That is all over;" and a tear would fall on her hands as she plied the needle.

Rosalie, formerly so cheerful and always singing, had changed. Her rounded cheeks had lost their color, and were now almost hollow, sometimes with an earthy hue. Jeanne frequently asked her: "Are you ill, my girl?" The little maid would reply: "No, Madame;" then her cheeks would redden slightly and she would retire hastily.

At the end of January the snow came. In one night the whole plain was covered and the trees next morning were white with an icy crust.

On one of these mornings, Jeanne was sitting warming her feet before the fire in her room, while

Rosalie, who had changed from day to day, was making the bed. Suddenly hearing behind her a kind of moan, Jeanne asked, without turning her head: "What is the matter?"

The maid replied as usual: "Nothing, Madame;" but her voice was weak and trembling.

Jeanne's thoughts were on something else, when she noticed that the girl was not moving about the room. She called: "Rosalie!" Still no sound. Then, thinking she might have left the room, she spoke in a louder tone: "Rosalie!" and she was reaching out her arm to ring the bell, when a deep moan close beside her made her start up with a shudder.

The little servant, her face livid, her eyes haggard, was seated on the floor, her legs stretched out, and her back leaning against the bed. Jeanne sprang toward her: "What is the matter with you—what is the matter?" she asked.

The girl did not reply or move. She stared vacantly at her mistress and gasped as if she were in terrible pain. Then, suddenly, she slid down on her back at full length, clinching her teeth to smother a cry of anguish.

Jeanne suddenly understood, and almost distracted, she ran to the head of the stairs, crying: "Julien! Julien!"

"What do you want?" he replied from below.

She hardly knew how to tell him: "It is Rosalie, who——"

Julien rushed upstairs two steps at a time, and, going abruptly into the room, he found the poor girl had just been delivered of a child. He looked round with a wicked look on his face, and pushing his terrified wife out of the room, exclaimed: "This

is none of your affair. Go away! Send me Ludivine and old Simon."

Jeanne, trembling, descended to the kitchen, and then, not daring to go upstairs again, she went into the drawing-room, in which there had been no fire since her parents left, and anxiously awaited developments.

Presently she saw the man-servant running out of the house. Five minutes later he returned with the Widow Dentu, the nurse of the district.

Then there was a great commotion on the stairs as if they were carrying a wounded person; and Julien came in and told Jeanne that she might go back to her room.

She trembled as if she had witnessed some terrible accident. She sat down again before the fire, and asked: "How is she?"

Julien, preoccupied and nervous, was pacing up and down the room. He seemed to be growing angry, and did not reply at first. Then he stopped and said: "What do you intend to do with this girl?"

She did not understand, and looked at her husband. "Why, what do you mean? I do not know."

Then, suddenly flying into a rage, he exclaimed: "We cannot keep a bastard in the house."

Jeanne was very much bewildered, and said at the end of a long silence: "But, my friend, perhaps we could put it out to nurse?"

He cut her short: "And who will pay the bill? You will, no doubt?" She reflected for some time, trying to find a way out of the difficulty; at length she said: "Why, the father will take care of the child; and if he marries Rosalie there will be no more difficulty."

Julien, as if his patience were exhausted, replied furiously: "The father!—the father!—do you know him—the father?—No, is it not so? Well, then?"

Jeanne, much affected, became excited: "But you certainly would not turn the girl away like that. It would be cowardly! We will inquire the name of the man, and we will go and find him, and he will have to explain matters."

Julien had grown calmer, and resumed his pacing to and fro. "My dear," he said, "she will not tell the name of the man; she will not tell you any more than she will tell me—and if he does not want her? We cannot, however, keep a woman and her illegitimate child under our roof, don't you understand?"

Jeanne, persistent, replied: "Then he must be a wretch, this man! But we must certainly find out who it is, and then he will have us to deal with."

Julien colored, became annoyed again, and said: "But, meanwhile——"

She did not know what course to take, and asked: "What do you propose?"

"Oh, I—that's very simple. I would give her some money and send her to the devil with her brat."

The young wife, indignant, was disgusted with him. "That shall never be," she said. "She is my foster-sister, that girl; we grew up together. She has made a mistake, so much the worse; but I will not cast her out of doors on that account; and, if it is necessary, I will bring up the child."

Then Julien's wrath exploded: "And we should earn a fine reputation, we, with our name and our position! They would say of us everywhere that

we were protecting vice, harboring beggars; decent people never would set their foot inside our doors. What are you thinking of? You must be crazy!"

She remained quite calm. "I never shall cast Rosalie off. If you do not wish her to stay, my mother will take her; and we shall surely succeed in finding out the name of the father of the child."

He left the room in exasperation, banging the door after him, and exclaiming: "What stupid ideas women have!"

In the afternoon Jeanne went up to see the patient. The little maid, watched over by Widow Dentu, was lying still in her bed, her eyes wide open, while the nurse held the new-born babe in her arms.

As soon as Rosalie perceived her mistress, she began to sob, hiding her face in the covers and shaking with emotion. Jeanne wished to kiss her, but the girl avoided it by keeping her face covered. But the nurse interfered, and, drawing away the sheet, uncovered her face, and she let Jeanne kiss her, weeping still, but more quietly.

A meager fire was burning in the grate; the room was cold; the child was crying. Jeanne did not dare to speak of the little one for fear of another attack; and she took her maid's hand as she said mechanically: "It will not matter, it will not matter."

The poor girl glanced furtively at the nurse, and trembled as the infant wailed; and the remembrance of her sorrow came to her mind occasionally in a convulsive sob, while suppressed tears choked her.

Jeanne kissed her again and murmured softly in her ear: "We will take good care of it, never

fear, my girl." Then, as Rosalie was beginning to cry again, Jeanne made her escape.

She went to see the girl every day, and each time Rosalie burst into tears at the sight of her mistress.

The child was put out to nurse with a neighbor.

Julien, however, hardly spoke to his wife, as if he had nourished anger against her ever since she refused to send away the maid. He referred to the subject one day, but Jeanne took from her pocket a letter from the Baroness asking them to send the girl to them at once if they would not keep her at The Poplars. Julien, furious, cried: "Your mother is as foolish as you are!" but he did not insist any more on sending Rosalie away.

Two weeks later the patient was able to rise and take up her work again.

One morning Jeanne made her sit down, and, taking her hands and looking steadfastly at her, she said:

"Now, my girl, tell me everything."

Rosalie began to tremble, and faltered:

"What, Madame?"

"Whose is it, this child?"

The little maid was overcome with confusion; and she sought wildly to withdraw her hands so as to hide her face. But Jeanne kissed her in spite of herself, and consoled her, saying: "It is a misfortune, but it cannot be helped, my girl. You were weak; but that happens to many others. If the father marries you no one will think of it again."

Rosalie sighed as if she were suffering, and from time to time made an effort to disengage herself and run away.

Jeanne resumed: "I understand perfectly that you are ashamed; but you see that I am not angry,

that I speak kindly to you. If I ask you the name of the man it is for your own good, for I feel from your grief that he has deserted you; and I wish to prevent that. Julien will go and look for him, you see, and we shall compel him to marry you; and, as we shall employ you both, we shall compel him also to make you happy."

This time Rosalie gave such a jerk that she snatched her hands away from her mistress and ran away as if she were mad.

That evening at dinner Jeanne said to Julien: "I tried to persuade Rosalie to tell me the name of her betrayer. I did not succeed. You try to find out, so that we can force this miserable man to marry her."

But Julien became angry: "Oh! you know I do not wish to hear anything about it. You wish to keep this girl—keep her, but do not bother me about her."

Since the girl's illness he appeared to be more irritable than ever; and he had fallen into the way of never speaking to his wife without shouting as if he were in a rage; while she, on the contrary, would lower her voice, be gentle and conciliating, to avoid all argument; but she often wept at night after she went to bed.

In spite of his constant irritability, her husband had recently pressed certain attentions upon her very frequently.

Rosalie was soon quite well and less sad, although she appeared terrified, pursued by some unknown fear, and she ran away twice when Jeanne tried to question her again.

Suddenly Julien became more amiable, and the young wife, clinging to vain hopes, also became more

cheerful. The thaw had not yet set in, and a hard, smooth, glittering covering of snow extended over the landscape. Neither men nor animals were to be seen; only the smoke from the chimneys of the cottages gave evidence of life.

One evening the thermometer fell still lower, and Julien, shivering as he left the table (for the dining-room never was properly heated, he was so economical with the wood), rubbed his hands, murmuring: "This will be a good night to keep each other warm, won't it, my dear?"

He laughed with his merry laugh of former days; and Jeanne threw her arms around his neck, saying: "I do not feel well, dear; perhaps I shall be better to-morrow."

"As you wish, my love; if you are ill you must take care of yourself." And they began to talk of other things.

She retired early. Julien, for a wonder, had a fire lighted in her room. As soon as he saw that it was burning brightly, he kissed his wife on the forehead and left the room.

The whole house seemed to be penetrated by the cold; the very walls seemed to be shivering, and Jeanne shivered in her bed. Twice she got up to put fresh logs on the fire and to look for dresses, skirts, and other garments, which she piled on the bed. Nothing seemed to warm her; her feet were numbed and her lower limbs seemed to tingle, making her excessively nervous and restless.

Then her teeth began to chatter, her hands shook; there was a tightness in her chest, her heart began to beat with hard, dull pulsations, and at times seemed to stop beating, and she gasped for breath.

A terrible apprehension seized her, while the cold seemed to penetrate to her marrow. She had never felt such a sensation; she never had seemed to lose her hold on life like this before, never had seemed so near her last breath.

"I am about to die," she thought; "I am dying——"

And, filled with terror, she jumped out of bed, rang for Rosalie, waited, rang again, waited again, shivering and frozen.

The little maid did not come. She was doubtless asleep, that first sound sleep which nothing can disturb. Jeanne, in despair, darted toward the stairs in her bare feet, and groping her way she ascended the staircase quietly, found the door, opened it, and called: "Rosalie!" She went forward, stumbled against the bed, felt all over it with her hands, and found that it was empty. It was empty and cold, as if no one had slept there. Much surprised, she said: "What! Has she gone out in weather like this?"

But, as her heart began to beat tumultuously till she seemed to be suffocating, she went downstairs again with trembling limbs in order to wake Julien. She rushed into his room, filled with the idea that she was about to die, and longing to see him before she lost consciousness.

By the light of the dying embers she perceived Rosalie's head lying on her husband's shoulder.

At the cry she gave they both started to their feet. She stood motionless for a second, horrified at this discovery, and then fled to her room; and when Julien, at his wits' end, called "Jeanne!" she was seized with an overmastering terror of seeing him, of hearing his voice, of listening to him explain-

ing, lying, of meeting his gaze. She darted toward the stairs again and went down.

She ran along in the darkness, at the risk of falling downstairs, or of breaking her neck on the stone floor of the hall. She rushed along, impelled by an imperious desire to flee, to know nothing about it, to see no one.

When she was at the foot of the stairs she sat down on one of the steps, still in her night-dress and bare feet, and remained there in a dazed condition. She heard Julien moving and walking about. She started to her feet in order to escape him. He was just about to come downstairs and called: "Listen, Jeanne!"

No, she would not listen nor let him touch her with the tip of his finger; and she darted into the dining-room as if she were fleeing from an assassin. She looked for a door of escape, a hiding-place, a dark corner, some way of avoiding him. She hid under the table. But he was already at the door, a candle in his hand, still calling: "Jeanne!" She set off again like a hare, darted into the kitchen, ran round it twice like a trapped animal, and as he came near her she suddenly opened the door into the garden and rushed out into the night.

The contact with the snow, into which she occasionally sank up to her knees, seemed to give her the energy of despair. She did not feel cold, although she had little on. She felt nothing, her body was so numbed from the emotion of her mind, and she ran along as white as the snow itself.

She followed the large avenue, crossed the wood and the ditch, and set off more rapidly across the plain.

There was no moon; the stars shone like sparks

of fire in the black sky; but the plain was light with a dull whiteness, and lay in infinite silence.

Jeanne walked quickly, hardly breathing, not knowing, not thinking of anything. She suddenly stopped on the edge of the cliff. She paused instinctively, and crouched down, bereft of thought and of will power.

In the abyss before her the silent, invisible sea exhaled the salt odor of its wrack at low tide.

She remained thus some time, her mind as inert as her body; then suddenly she began to tremble violently, like a sail shaken by the wind. Her arms, her hands, her feet, impelled by an invisible force, throbbed, pulsated wildly, and her consciousness awakened abruptly, sharp and poignant.

Old memories passed before her mental vision; the sail with *him* in Père Lastique's boat, their conversation, his nascent love, the christening of the boat; then she went further back, to that night of dreams when she first came to The Poplars. And now! Ah, her life was wrecked, all joy was gone, all expectation at an end! The frightful future, full of torture, of deception, and of despair, appeared before her. Better to die—it would all be over at once.

But a voice cried in the distance: "Here it is! Here are her steps! Quick, quick, this way!" It was Julien, who was looking for her.

Oh, she did not wish to see him again! In the abyss down yonder before her she now heard a slight sound, the indistinct ripple of the waves over the rocks. She rose to her feet with the idea of throwing herself over the cliff; and, bidding life farewell, like one in despair, she uttered the last word of the dying, the last word of the young soldier slain in battle: "Mother!"

Suddenly the thought of "little mother" came to her mind; she saw her sobbing; she saw her father on his knees before her mangled remains; and in a second she felt all the pain of their sorrow.

She sank down again into the snow; and when Julien and old Simon, followed by Marius carrying a lantern, seized her arm to pull her back, as she was so close to the brink, she made no attempt to escape.

She let them do as they would, for she could not stir. She felt that they were carrying her, and then that she was being put to bed and rubbed with hot cloths; then she became unconscious.

Then she had a nightmare—or was it a nightmare? She was in bed. It was broad daylight, but she could not get up. Why? She did not know. Then she heard a little noise on the floor, a sort of scratching, a rustling, and suddenly a mouse, a little gray mouse, ran quickly across the sheet. Another followed it, then a third, which ran toward her chest with his little quick scamper. Jeanne was not afraid; and she reached out her hand to seize the animal, but could not catch it. Then other mice —ten, twenty, hundreds, thousands—rose on all sides of her. They climbed the bedposts, ran up the tapestries, covered the bed completely. And soon they crept beneath the covers; Jeanne felt them gliding over her skin, tickling her limbs, running up and down her body. She saw them running from the bottom of the bed to get into her neck under the sheets; and she tried to fight them off, throwing her hands out to try to catch them, but always finding them empty.

She was frantic, wanted to escape, screamed, and it seemed as if she were being held down, as if

strong arms enfolded her and rendered her helpless; but she saw no one.

She had no idea of time. It must have been long, a very long time.

Then she awoke, weary, aching, but quiet. She felt weak, very weak. She opened her eyes and was not surprised to see " little mother " seated in her room, with a big man whom she did not know.

How old was she? She did not know, and thought she was a very little girl. She had no recollection of anything.

The big man said: " Why, she has regained consciousness." Little mother began to weep. Then the big man resumed: " Come, be calm, Baroness. I can insure her recovery now. But do not talk to her at all. Let her sleep, let her sleep."

Then it seemed to Jeanne that she remained in a state of exhaustion for a long time, overcome by a heavy sleep as soon as she tried to think; and she tried not to remember anything whatever, as if she had a vague fear that the reality might come back to her.

Once when she awoke she saw Julien, alone, standing beside her; and suddenly it all came back to her, as if the curtain which hid her past life had been raised.

She felt a horrible pain in her heart, and wanted to escape once more. She threw back the coverlets, jumped to the floor, and fell down, her limbs being too weak to support her.

Julien sprang toward her; and she began to scream for him not to touch her. She writhed and rolled on the floor. The door opened. Aunt Lison came running in with Widow Dentu, then the Baron, and, finally, " little mother," puffing and distracted.

They put her back into bed, and she immediately closed her eyes, so as to escape talking and be able to think quietly.

Her mother and aunt watched over her anxiously, saying: "Do you hear us now, Jeanne, my little Jeanne?"

She pretended to be deaf, not to hear them, and did not answer. Night came on, and the nurse took her place beside the bed. Jeanne did not sleep; she kept trying to think of things that had escaped her memory as if there were holes in it, great, white, empty places, where events had not been noted down.

Little by little, she began to recall the facts, and she pondered over them steadily.

The mother, Aunt Lison, and the Baron had come, so she must have been very ill. But Julien? What had he said? Did her parents know? And Rosalie, where was she? And what should she do? What should she do? An idea came to her—she would return to Rouen and live with her father and mother as in old days. She would be a widow; that was all.

Then she waited, listening to what was being said around her, understanding everything without letting them know it, rejoicing at her returning reason, patient and crafty.

That evening, at last, she found herself alone with the Baroness and called to her in a low tone: "Little mother!" Her own voice astonished her; it seemed strange. The Baroness seized her hands: "My daughter! My darling Jeanne! My child, do you recognize me?"

"Yes, little mother, but you must not weep; we have a great deal to talk about. Did Julien tell you why I ran away in the snow?"

"Yes, my darling, you have a very dangerous fever."

"It was not that, mamma. I had the fever afterward; but did he tell you what gave me the fever and why I ran away?"

"No, my dearie."

"It was because I found Rosalie in his room."

Her mother thought she was delirious again, and soothed her, saying: "Go to sleep, darling; calm yourself, try to sleep."

But Jeanne, persistent, continued: "I am quite sensible now, little mother. I am not talking wildly, as I must have talked these last few days. I felt ill one night, and I went to look for Julien; Rosalie was with him in his room. I did not know what I was doing, for sorrow, and I ran out into the snow to throw myself off the cliff."

But the Baroness reiterated: "Yes, darling, you have been very ill, very ill."

"It is not that, mamma; I found Rosalie in bed with Julien, and I will not live with him any longer. You will take me back with you to Rouen, to live as we used to live."

The Baroness, whom the doctor had warned not to thwart Jeanne in any way, replied: "Yes, my darling."

But the invalid grew impatient: "I see that you do not believe me. Go and fetch father—he will soon understand."

The Baroness left the room, and presently returned leaning on her husband's arm. They sat down beside the bed, and Jeanne began to talk. She told them all, quietly, in a weak voice, but clearly; all about Julien's peculiar character, his harshness, his avarice, and, finally, his infidelity.

When she had finished the Baron saw that she was not delirious, but he did not know what to think, what to determine, or what to answer. He took her hand, tenderly, as he used to do when he put her to sleep with stories, and said: "Listen, dearie, we must act with prudence. We must do nothing rash. Try to bear with your husband until we can come to some decision—promise me this?"

"I will try, but I will not stay here after I get well," Jeanne replied.

Then she added in a lower tone: "Where is Rosalie now?"

"You will not see her any more," replied the Baron.

But she persisted: "Where is she? I wish to know." Then he confessed that she had not left the house, but declared that she was to go soon.

On leaving the room the Baron, filled with indignation and wounded in his feelings as a father, went to look for Julien, and said to him abruptly:

"Sir, I have come to ask you for an explanation of your conduct toward my daughter. You have been unfaithful to her with her maid, which is a double insult."

Julien pretended to be innocent, denied everything positively, swore, took God as his witness. What proof had they, he asked? Was not Jeanne delirious? Had she not had brain fever? Had she not run out in the snow, in an attack of delirium, at the very beginning of her illness? And it was just at this time, when she was running about the house almost naked, that she pretends she saw her maid in her husband's room!

He grew angry, threatened a lawsuit, became furious. The Baron, bewildered, made excuses,

begged his pardon, and held out his loyal hand to Julien, who refused to take it.

When Jeanne heard what her husband had said, she did not show any annoyance, but replied: "He is lying, papa, but we shall end by convicting him."

For some days she remained taciturn and reserved, thinking over matters. The third morning she asked to see Rosalie. The Baron refused to send her up, saying she had left. Jeanne persisted, saying: "Well, let some one go and fetch her."

She was beginning to get excited, when the doctor came. They told him everything, so that he could form an opinion. But Jeanne suddenly burst into tears, her nerves being all unstrung, and almost screaming: "I want Rosalie; I wish to see her!"

The doctor took her hand and said, in a low tone: "Calm yourself, Madame; any emotion may lead to serious consequences, for you are *enceinte.*"

She was dumfounded, as if she had received a blow; and it seemed to her that she felt the first stirrings of life within her. Then she was silent, not even listening to what was being said, absorbed in her own thoughts. She could not sleep that night for thinking of the new life that was developing in her, and was sad at the thought that it was Julien's child and might resemble him. The following morning she sent for the Baron.

"Little father," she said, "my resolution is formed; I wish to know everything, and especially just now; you understand, I insist, and you know that you must not thwart me in my present condition. Listen! You must bring Monsieur le curé. I need him here to keep Rosalie from telling a lie. Then, as soon as he comes, send him up to me, and you stay here with little mother. And, above all

things, see that Julien does not suspect anything."

An hour later the priest came, looking fatter than ever, and puffing like the Baroness. He sat down in an armchair and began to joke, wiping his forehead as usual with his plaid handkerchief.

"Well, Baroness, I do not think we grow any thinner; I think we make a good pair." Then, turning toward the patient, he said: "Eh, what is this I hear, young lady, that we are soon to have a fresh baptism? Aho, it will not be a boat this time!" In a graver tone he added: "It will be a defender of the country; unless"—after a moment's reflection—"it should be the prospective mother of a family, like you, Madame," bowing to the Baroness.

The door at the end of the room opened and Rosalie appeared, beside herself, weeping, refusing to enter the room, clinging to the door-frame, and being pushed forward by the Baron. Quite out of patience, he thrust her into the room. She covered her face with her hands and remained standing there, sobbing.

Jeanne, as soon as she saw her, rose to a sitting posture, whiter than the sheets, and with her heart beating wildly. She could not speak, could hardly breathe. At length she said, in a voice broken with emotion: "I—I—do not—need—to question you. It—it is enough for me to see you thus—to—to see you—your shame in my presence."

After a pause, for she was out of breath, she continued: "I had Monsieur le curé come, so that it might be like a confession, you understand."

Rosalie, motionless, uttered little cries that were almost screams behind her hands.

The Baron, whose anger was gaining ground,

seized her arms, and snatching her hands from her face, he threw her on her knees beside the bed, saying: "Speak! Answer!"

She remained on the ground, in the position assigned to Magdalens, her cap awry, her apron on the floor, and her face again covered by her hands.

Then the priest said: "Come, my girl, listen to what is said to you, and reply. We do not wish to harm you, but we must know what occurred."

Jeanne, leaning over, looked at her and said: "Is it true that you were in bed with Julien when I surprised you?"

Rosalie moaned through her fingers: "Yes, Madame."

The Baroness suddenly began to cry in a choking fashion, and her convulsive sobs accompanied those of Rosalie.

Jeanne, with her eyes fixed on the maid, asked: "How long had this been going on?"

"Ever since he came here," faltered Rosalie.

Jeanne could not understand. "Ever since he came—then—ever—since—ever since the spring?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Ever since he came into this house?"

"Yes, Madame."

And Jeanne, as if overflowing with questions, asked, speaking precipitately:

"But how did it happen? How did he approach you? How did he persuade you? What did he say? When, how, did you ever yield to him? How could you ever have done it?"

Rosalie, removing her hands from her face, and overwhelmed also with a feverish desire to speak, to reply, said:

"How do I know, myself? It was the day he

dined here for the first time, and he came up to my room. He had hidden himself in the loft. I did not dare to scream, for fear of making a scandal. I no longer knew what I was doing. Then I said nothing because I liked him!"

"But—your—your child—is his child?" Jeanne exclaimed, almost in a scream.

"Yes, Madame," Rosalie sobbed.

Then they were both silent. The only sound to be heard was the sobbing of Rosalie and of the Baroness.

Jeanne, quite overcome, felt her tears also beginning to flow.

The maid's child had the same father as her own child! Her anger was at an end; she now was filled with a dreary, slow, profound, and infinite despair. She presently resumed in a changed, tearful voice —the voice of a woman who has been weeping:

"When we returned from—from down there—from our journey—when did he begin again?"

The little maid, who had sunk down on the floor, faltered: "The first evening."

Each word wrung Jeanne's heart. So on the very first night of their return to The Poplars he left her for this girl! That was the reason why he wished to sleep alone!

She now knew all she wanted to know, and exclaimed: "Go away, go away!" And as Rosalie, perfectly crushed, did not stir, Jeanne called to her father: "Take her away! Carry her away!" The priest, who had said nothing as yet, thought that the moment had arrived for him to preach a little sermon.

"What you have done is very wrong, my daughter, very wrong, and God will not pardon you so

easily. Consider the hell that awaits you if you do not always act right. Now that you have a child, you must behave yourself. No doubt Madame la Baronne will do something for you, and we will find you a husband."

He would have continued speaking, but the Baron, having again seized Rosalie by the shoulders, raised her from the floor, dragged her to the door, and threw her like a package into the corridor. As he turned back into the room, looking paler than his daughter, the priest resumed: "What can one do? They are all like that in the district. It is shocking, but cannot be helped, and then one must be a little indulgent toward the weaknesses of our nature. They never get married until they have become *enceinte*—never, Madame." He added, smiling: "One might call it a local custom. So you see, Monsieur, your maid did as all the rest do."

But the Baron, who was trembling with nervousness, interrupted him, saying: "She! what do I care about her? It is Julien with whom I am indignant. It is infamous, the way he has behaved, and I shall take my daughter away."

He walked up and down excitedly, becoming more and more exasperated: "It is infamous to have betrayed my child, infamous! He is a wretch, this man, a wretch, a villain, and I will tell him so. I will slap his face; I will give him a horsewhipping!"

The priest, who was slowly taking a pinch of snuff, seated beside the Baroness, still in tears, and endeavoring to fulfil his office of a peacemaker, said: "Come, Monsieur le Baron, between ourselves, he has done what every one else does. Do you know many husbands who are faithful?" He added with

a sly good humor: "Come, now, I wager that you have had your turn. Your hand on your heart—am I right?"

The Baron had stopped in astonishment before the priest, who continued: "Why, yes, you did just as others do. Who knows whether you did not make love to a little sugar-plum like that? I tell you that every one does. Your wife was none the less happy or less loved—am I not right?"

The Baron had not stirred; he was much disturbed. What the priest said was true, and he had sinned as much as any one and had not hesitated when his wife's maids were in question. Was he a wretch on that account? Why should he judge Julien's conduct so severely when his own had not been above reproach?

The Baroness, still struggling with her sobs, smiled faintly at the recollection of her husband's escapades, for she belonged to the sentimental class for whom love adventures are a part of existence.

Jeanne, exhausted, lay with wide-open eyes, absorbed in painful reflection. Something Rosalie had said had wounded her, as if an arrow had pierced her heart: "Then I said nothing, because I liked him."

She had liked him also, and that was the only reason why she had given herself, bound herself for life to him, the reason why she had renounced everything else, all her cherished plans, all the unknown future. She had fallen into this marriage, into this hole without any edges whereby one could climb out, into this wretchedness, this sadness, this despair, because, like Rosalie, she had liked him!

The door was pushed open violently, and Julien appeared, with a furious expression on his face. He

had caught sight of Rosalie moaning on the stairs, and suspected that something was up, that the maid had probably told all. The sight of the priest riveted him to the spot.

"Why? What's the matter?" he asked, in a trembling but quiet tone.

The Baron, so violent a short while ago, did not venture to speak, afraid of the priest's remarks, and of what his son-in-law might say in the same strain. The mother was weeping more copiously than ever; but Jeanne had raised herself with her hands and, breathing quickly, looked at the man who had caused her such cruel sorrow. She stammered: "The fact is, we know all—all your rascality since—since the day you first entered this house—we know that the child of this maid is your child, just as—as—mine is—they will be brothers!" Overcome with sorrow at this thought, she buried herself in the sheets and wept bitterly.

Julien stood there gaping, not knowing what to say or do. The priest came to the rescue.

"Come, come, do not give way like that, my dear young lady! Be sensible." He rose, approached the bed, and placed his warm hand on the despairing girl's forehead. This seemed to soothe her strangely. She felt quieted, as if this strong peasant's hand, accustomed to the gesture of absolution, to kindly consolation, had conveyed by its touch some mysterious solace.

The good man, still standing, continued: "Madame, we must always forgive. A great sorrow has come to you; but God in His mercy has balanced it by a great happiness, since you will become a mother. This child will be your comfort. In his name I implore you, I adjure you to forgive Mon-

sieur Julien's error. It will be a new bond between you, a pledge of his future fidelity. Can you remain apart in your heart from him whose child you bear?"

She did not reply, crushed, mortified, exhausted as she was, without even strength for anger or resentment. Her nerves seemed relaxed, almost severed; she seemed to be hardly alive.

The Baroness, who seemed incapable of resentment, and whose mind was unequal to prolonged effort, murmured: "Come, come, Jeanne!"

The priest took the hand of the young man, and, leading him up to the bed, he placed it in that of his wife, giving it a little tap as if to unite them more closely. Then, laying aside his professional tone and manner, he said with a satisfied air:

"Well, now, that's done. Believe me that is the best thing to do."

The two hands, joined for a moment, separated immediately. Julien, not daring to kiss Jeanne, kissed his mother-in-law on the forehead, turned on his heel, took the arm of the Baron, who acquiesced, happy at heart that the thing had been settled thus; and they went out together to smoke.

The patient, overcome, dozed off while the priest and the mother talked in low tones.

The priest explained and propounded his ideas, to which the Baroness assented by nodding her head. He said in conclusion: "Well, then, that is understood; you will give this girl the Barville farm, and I will undertake to find her a husband, a good, steady fellow. Oh, with a property worth twenty thousand francs, we shall have no lack of suitors. There will be more than enough to choose from."

The Baroness was smiling now, quite happy, with the marks of two tears that had dried on her cheeks.

She repeated: "That is settled. Barville is worth at least twenty thousand francs, but it will be settled on the child, the parents having the use of it during their lifetime."

The priest rose and shook the Baroness's hand, saying: "Do not disturb yourself, Madame la Baronne, do not disturb yourself; I know what an effort it is."

As he went out he met Aunt Lison coming to see her patient. She noticed nothing; they told her nothing; and she knew nothing, as usual.

CHAPTER VIII

MATERNITY

AT the thought of being a mother Jeanne felt no joy; she had had so much sorrow. Rosalie left the house. Jeanne awaited the advent of her child without curiosity, still filled with the apprehension of unknown misfortunes.

A big woman, big as a house, had taken Rosalie's place and supported the Baroness in the monotonous walks along her avenue. The Baron gave his arm to Jeanne, who was now always ailing; while Lison, uneasy, and busied about the approaching event, held her other hand, bewildered at this mystery which she never would know.

They walked along like this almost in silence, for hours at a time, while Julien was riding about the country on horseback, having suddenly acquired this taste. Nothing ever happened to disturb their dreary life. The Baron, his wife, and the Vicomte paid a visit to the Fourvilles, with whom Julien seemed to be already well acquainted, without one

knowing just how. Another ceremonious visit was exchanged with the Brisevilles, who were still hidden in their manor house.

One afternoon, about four o'clock, two persons, a lady and a gentleman on horseback, rode up into the courtyard of the château. Julien, greatly excited, ran up to Jeanne's room. "Quick, quick! come downstairs! here are the Fourvilles. They have just come as neighbors, knowing your condition. Tell them that I have gone out, but that I shall soon return. I will just go and make myself presentable."

Jeanne, much surprised, went downstairs. A pale, pretty young woman, with a sad face, dreamy eyes, and lusterless, fair hair, looking as if the sunlight never had kissed it, quietly introduced her husband, a kind of giant, or ogre, with a large red mustache. She added: "We have several times had the pleasure of meeting Monsieur de Lamare. We heard from him how you were suffering; and we would not put off coming to see you as neighbors, without any ceremony. You see that we came on horseback. I had also the pleasure the other day of a visit from Madame your mother and the Baron."

She spoke with perfect ease, familiarly, but in a well-bred way. Jeanne was charmed, and fell in love with her at once. "This is a friend," she thought.

The Comte de Fourville, on the contrary, seemed like a bear in the drawing-room. As soon as he was seated he put his hat on the chair next him, did not know what to do with his hands, placed them on his knees, then on the arm of the chair, and finally crossed his fingers as if in prayer.

Suddenly Julien entered the room. Jeanne was amazed and did not recognize him. He had shaved! He looked handsome, elegant, and attractive, as on the day of their betrothal. He shook the Comte's hairy paw, kissed the hand of the Comtesse, whose ivory cheeks flushed slightly, while her eyelids quivered.

He began to speak; he was as charming as in former days. His large eyes, the mirrors of love, had become tender again; and his hair, lately so dull and unkempt, had regained its soft, glossy wave, with the use of a hairbrush and perfumed oil.

At the moment that the Fourvilles were taking their leave, the Comtesse, turning toward him, said: "Would you like to take a ride on Thursday, dear Vicomte?"

As he bowed and murmured: "Why, certainly, Madame," she took Jeanne's hand and said in a sympathetic and affectionate tone, with a cordial smile: "Oh, when you are well we will all three gallop about the country! It will be delightful; what do you say?"

With an easy gesture she held up her riding-skirt, and then jumped into the saddle with the lightness of a bird; while her husband, after bowing awkwardly, mounted his big Norman steed.

As they disappeared outside the gate, Julien, who seemed charmed, exclaimed: "What delightful people! Those are friends who may be useful to us."

Jeanne, pleased also without knowing why, replied: "The little Comtesse is charming; I feel that I shall love her; but the husband looks like a brute. Where did you meet them?"

He rubbed his hands together good-humoredly:

"I met them by chance at the Brisevilles. The husband seems a little rough. He cares for nothing but hunting, but he is a real nobleman for all that."

The dinner was almost cheerful, as if some secret happiness had come into the house.

Nothing new happened until the latter days of July, when Jeanne was taken ill. As she seemed to grow worse, the doctor was sent for, and at the first glance recognized the symptoms of a premature confinement.

Her sufferings presently abated a little, but she was filled with a terrible anguish, a despairing sinking, something like a presentiment, the mysterious touch of death. It is in these moments, when it comes so near to us, that its breath chills our hearts.

The room was full of people. The mother, buried in an armchair, was choking with grief. The Baron, his hands trembling, ran hither and thither, carrying things, consulting the doctor, and losing his head. Julien paced up and down, looking concerned, but perfectly calm; and Widow Dentu stood at the foot of the bed with an appropriate expression, the expression of a woman of experience whom nothing astonishes. The cook, Ludivine, and Aunt Lison remained discreetly concealed behind the door of the lobby.

Toward morning Jeanne became worse, and as her involuntary screams escaped from between her closed teeth, she thought incessantly of Rosalie, who had not suffered much, who had hardly moaned, who had borne her child without agony and without difficulty; and in her wretched and troubled mind she continually compared their conditions, and cursed

God, whom she had formerly thought to be just. She rebelled at the wicked partiality of fate and at the wicked lies of those who preach of justice and divine goodness.

At times her sufferings were so great that her mind was a blank. She had neither strength, life, nor knowledge for anything but her suffering.

In moments of respite she could not take her eyes off Julien; and another sorrow, the sorrow of her soul, crushed her when she recalled the day that her maid fell down at the foot of this same bed and gave birth to her child—the brother of the little being who would soon call her mother. She remembered with perfect clearness the gestures, the words, the looks of her husband in the presence of that recumbent girl; and now she read in him, as if his thoughts were expressed in his movements, the same bored feeling, the same indifference for her as for the other, the same disregard of an egoist, whom paternity annoys. A frightful spasm came over her, and she said: "I am about to die. I am dying!" Then a furious indignation, a need of cursing somebody, filled her soul, and an aggravated hatred toward this man who had caused her suffering, and toward the unknown child that was killing her.

Suddenly her sufferings ceased. The nurse and the doctor leaned over her and gave her all attention. Presently she heard a little cry, and in spite of her weakness she unconsciously held out her arms. She was suddenly filled with joy, with a glimpse of a new-found happiness which had just unfolded. Her child was born; she was soothed, happy—happy as she never yet had been. Her heart and her body revived; she was now a mother!

She felt that she was saved, secure from all despair, for she had here something to love.

From that moment she had but one thought—her child. She was a fanatical mother, the more intensely so because she had been deceived in her love, deceived in her hopes. She would sit whole days beside the window, rocking the little cradle.

The Baron and his wife smiled at this excess of tenderness, but Julien, whose habitual routine had been interfered with, and whose overwhelming importance had been diminished by the arrival of this noisy and all-powerful tyrant, unconsciously jealous of this mite of a man who had usurped his place in the house, kept saying angrily and impatiently: "How wearisome she is with her brat!"

She became so obsessed by this affection that she would pass the entire night beside the child's cradle, watching him as he slept. As she was becoming exhausted by this morbid life, taking no rest, growing weaker and thinner, and beginning to cough, the doctor ordered the child to be taken from her. She grew angry, wept, implored, but they were deaf to her entreaties. His nurse took him every evening, and each night his mother would rise, and in her bare feet go to the door, listen at the keyhole to see whether he were sleeping quietly, did not wake up, and wanted nothing.

Julien found her there one night when he came home late, after dining with the Fourvilles. After that they locked her in her room to compel her to stay in bed.

The baptism took place at the end of August. The Baron was godfather and Aunt Lison godmother. The child was named Pierre-Simon-Paul; and was called Paul, for short.

At the beginning of September Aunt Lison left without any commotion. Her absence was as little felt as her presence.

One evening after dinner the priest appeared. He seemed embarrassed, as if he were burdened by some mystery, and after some idle remarks he asked the Baroness and her husband to grant him a short interview in private.

The three walked slowly down the long avenue, talking with animation, while Julien, who was alone with Jeanne, was astonished, disturbed, and annoyed at this secrecy.

He accompanied the priest when he took his leave, and they went together toward the church, where the Angelus was ringing.

As it was cool, almost cold, the others went into the drawing-room. They were all dozing when Julien came in abruptly, his face red, looking very indignant.

From the door he called out to his parents-in-law, without remembering that Jeanne was there: "For God's sake, are you crazy, to go and throw away twenty thousand francs on that girl?"

No one replied, they were so astonished. He continued, bellowing with rage: "How can one be so stupid as that? Do you wish to leave us without a sou?"

The Baron, who had recovered his composure, attempted to stop him: "Keep still! Remember that you are speaking before your wife."

But Julien was trembling with excitement: "As if I cared! She knows all about it, anyway. It is robbing her."

Jeanne, bewildered, looked at him without understanding. She faltered: "What is the matter?"

Julien then turned toward her, to try to get her on his side, as a partner who had been cheated out of an expected fortune. He told her hurriedly about the conspiracy to marry off Rosalie, and about the gift of the Barville property, which was worth at least twenty thousand francs. He said: "Your parents are crazy, my dear, crazy enough to be shut up! Twenty thousand francs! Twenty thousand francs! Why! they have lost their heads! Twenty thousand francs for a bastard!"

Jeanne listened without emotion and without anger, astonished at her own calmness, indifferent now to everything but her own child.

The Baron was raging, but could find nothing to say. He finally burst forth and, stamping his foot, exclaimed: "Think of what you are saying; it is disgusting. Whose fault was it if we had to give this girl-mother a dowry? Whose child is it? You would like to abandon it now!"

Julien, amazed at the Baron's violence, looked at him fixedly. He then resumed in a calmer tone: "But fifteen hundred francs would be quite enough. They all have children before they are legally married. It makes no difference whose child it is, in any case. Instead of giving one of your farms, to the value of twenty thousand francs, in addition to making the world aware of what has happened, you should, to say the least, have had some regard for our name and our position."

He spoke in a severe tone like a man who stood on his rights and was convinced of the logic of his argument. The Baron, disturbed at this unexpected discussion, stood gaping at him. Julien, seeing his advantage, concluded: "Happily, nothing has yet been settled. I know the young fellow who is about

to marry her; he is an honest lad, and we can make a satisfactory arrangement with him. I will take charge of the matter."

He went out immediately, fearing, no doubt, to continue the discussion, and pleased that he had had the last word, a proof, he thought, that they acquiesced in his views.

As soon as he had left the room, however, the Baron exclaimed: "Oh, that is going too far, much too far!"

But Jeanne, happening to look up at her father's bewildered face, began to laugh with her clear, ringing laugh of former days, when anything amused her. She said: "Father, father, did you hear the tone in which he said 'twenty thousand francs'?"

The Baroness, whose mirth was as ready as her tears, as she recalled her son-in-law's angry expression, his indignant exclamations, and his refusal to allow the girl whom he had led astray to be given money that did not belong to him, delighted also at Jeanne's mirth, gave way to little bursts of laughter till the tears came to her eyes. The Baron caught the contagion, and all three laughed heartily, as they used to do in the good old days.

As soon as they had grown quieter, Jeanne said: "How strange it is that all this does not affect me! I look upon him now as a stranger. I cannot believe that I am his wife. You see how I can laugh at his—his—want of delicacy."

And, without knowing why, all three embraced one another, smiling and happy.

Two days later, after breakfast, just as Julien had set out on horseback, a strapping young fellow from twenty-two to twenty-five years of age, clad in a brand-new blue blouse with wide sleeves button-

ing at the wrist, slyly jumped over the gate, as if he had been there awaiting his opportunity all the morning, crept along the Couillards' ditch, came round the château, and cautiously approached the Baron and his wife, who were under the plane tree.

He took off his cap and advanced, bowing in an awkward manner. As soon as he was close to them he said: "Your servant, Monsieur le Baron, Madame, and the company. Then, as no one replied, he said: "It is I—I am Désiré Lecocq."

As the name conveyed nothing to them, the Baron asked: "What do you want?"

Then, altogether upset at the necessity of explaining himself, the young fellow stuttered, as he gazed alternately at his cap, which he held in his hands, and at the roof of the château: "It was Monsieur le curé who said something to me about this matter." He stopped, fearing he might say too much and compromise his own interests.

Then, lowering his voice, he blurted out: "That matter of your maid—Rosalie——"

Jeanne, who had guessed what was coming, had risen and moved away with her infant in her arms.

"Come nearer," said the Baron, pointing to the chair his daughter had just left.

The peasant sat down, murmuring: "You are very good." Then he waited as if he had no more to say. After a long silence he screwed up courage, and, looking up at the sky, remarked: "It's fine weather for the time of year. But the earth will be none the better for it, as the seed is already sown." Then he was silent again.

The Baron was growing impatient; he plunged into the subject and said dryly: "Then it is you who are to marry Rosalie?"

The man at once became uneasy, his Norman caution being on the alert. He replied with more animation, but with a tinge of defiance: "That depends; perhaps yes, perhaps no—it depends."

The Baron, annoyed at this evasion, exclaimed angrily: "Answer frankly, damn it! Was this what you came here for—yes or no? Will you marry her, yes or no?"

The bewildered man looked steadfastly at his feet. "If it is as Monsieur le curé said, I will take her; but if it is as Monsieur Julien said, I will not take her."

"What did Monsieur Julien tell you?"

"Monsieur Julien told me I should have fifteen hundred francs, and Monsieur le curé told me that I should have twenty thousand. I will do it for twenty thousand, but I will not do it for fifteen hundred."

The Baroness, who was buried in her easy-chair, began to giggle at the anxious expression of the peasant, who, not understanding this frivolity, glanced at her angrily out of the corner of his eye, and waited in silence.

The Baron, embarrassed at this bargaining, cut it short by saying: "I told Monsieur le curé that you should have the Barville farm during your lifetime, and that then it should revert to the child. It is worth twenty thousand francs. I do not go back on my word. Is it settled, yes or no?"

The man smiled with a humble and satisfied expression, and, suddenly becoming loquacious, said: "Oh, in that case, I will not say no. That was all that stood in my way. When Monsieur le curé spoke to me I was ready at once, and I was very pleased to accommodate the Baron, who was giving me that,

I said to myself. Is it not true that when people are willing to do each other favors they can always find a way, and can make it worth while? But Monsieur Julien came to see me, and talked of only fifteen hundred francs. I said to myself: 'I must see about that,' and so I came here. That is not to say that I did not trust you, but I wanted to know. Short accounts make long friends—is not that true, Monsieur le Baron?"

The Baron interrupted him by asking: "When do you wish to be married?"

The man became timid again, very much embarrassed, and finally said hesitatingly: "I will not do it until I get a little paper?"

This time the Baron got angry: "Damn it! You will have the marriage contract. That is the best kind of paper."

But the peasant was stubborn: "Meanwhile, I might take a little turn; it will not be dark for a while."

The Baron rose to make an end of the matter: "Answer, yes or no, at once. If you do not wish her, say so; I have another suitor."

The fear of a rival terrified the crafty Norman. He suddenly made up his mind, and held out his hand, as after buying a cow, saying: "Very well, Monsieur le Baron, it is a bargain. Whoever draws back is a coward."

The Baron shook his hand, then called out: "Ludivine!"

The cook appeared at the window.

"Bring us a bottle of wine."

They clinked glasses to seal the matter, and the young peasant departed with a light tread.

Nothing was said to Julien about this visit. The

contract was drawn up with all secrecy, and as soon as the banns were published the wedding took place, one Monday morning.

A neighbor carried the child to church, walking behind the bride and groom, as a sure sign of good luck. And no one in all the district was surprised; they simply envied Désiré Lecocq. "He was born with a caul," they said, with a sly smile which signified no resentment.

Julien was terribly angry, and made such a scene that his parents-in-law cut short their visit to The Poplars. Jeanne was only moderately sad at their departure, for little Paul had become for her an inexhaustible source of happiness.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAST DISILLUSION

AS Jeanne's health was quite restored, they determined to go and return the Fourvilles' visit, and also to call on the Marquis de Coutelier.

Julien had bought at an auction a new one-horse phaeton, so that they could go out twice a month. They set out one fine December morning, and after driving for two hours across the plains of Normandy, they began to descend a little slope into a valley, the sides of which were wooded, while the valley itself was cultivated. After an abrupt turn they saw the château of Vrillette, a wooded slope on one side of it and a large pond on the other, from which rose one of its walls, the pond being bounded by a wood of tall pine trees, that formed the other side of the valley.

Julien explained all the parts of the building to Jeanne, like one who knows his subject thoroughly, and went into raptures over its beauty, adding: "It

is full of game, this country. The Count loves to hunt here. This is a true seignorial residence."

The door of the hall was opened, and the pale Countess appeared, coming forward to meet the visitors, all smiles, and wearing a long trained robe, like a châtelaine of olden times. She looked a flitting lady of the lake, born to inhabit this fairy castle.

The Countess took both Jeanne's hands, as if she had known her all her life, and made her sit down beside her in a low chair, while Julien, whose long-neglected elegance appeared to have revived within the past five months, chatted and smiled quietly and familiarly.

The Countess and he talked of their horseback rides. She laughed at his manner of mounting a horse, and called him "le Chevalier Trébuche," and he smiled also, having nicknamed her "the Amazon queen."

A gun fired beneath the windows caused Jeanne to utter a little scream. It was the Count, who had killed a teal.

His wife called to him. A sound of oars was heard, a boat grinding against the stones, and he appeared, enormous, booted, followed by two drenched dogs, of a ruddy color like himself, who lay down on the mat outside the door.

He seemed more at his ease in his own home, and was delighted to see his visitors. He put some wood on the fire, sent for Madeira and biscuits, and then exclaimed suddenly: "You will take dinner with us, of course."

Jeanne, whose child never was out of her thoughts, declined. He insisted, and as she could not be persuaded Julien made a gesture of annoy-

ance. She feared to arouse his ugly, quarrelsome temper, so, although she was very unhappy at the thought that she should not see Paul until the next day, she consented to stay.

The afternoon was delightful. They first visited the springs, which bubbled up at the foot of a mossy rock, and then went rowing on the pond. At one end of the boat Julien and the Countess, wrapped in shawls, were smiling happily like those who have nothing left to wish for.

A huge fire was blazing in the spacious reception-room, which imparted a sense of warmth and contentment. The Count seized his wife in his arms and lifted her from the floor, as if she had been a child, and gave her a hearty kiss on each cheek, like a man satisfied with the world.

Jeanne, smiling, looked at this good giant whom one would have thought an ogre at the very sight of his mustaches, and she thought: "How one may be deceived each day about everybody!" Then, almost involuntarily, she glanced at Julien standing in the doorway, looking horribly pale, with his eyes fixed on the Count. She approached him and said in a low tone: "Are you ill? What is the matter with you?"

He answered her angrily: "Nothing! Let me alone! I was cold."

When they went into the dining-room the Count asked whether he might let his dogs come in; and they settled themselves one on each side of their master.

After dinner, as Jeanne and Julien were preparing to leave, M. de Fourville kept them a little longer to look at some fishing by torchlight. When they finally set out, wrapped in their cloaks and

some rugs they had borrowed, Jeanne said, almost involuntarily: "What a fine man that giant is!"

Julien, who was driving, replied: "Yes, but he does not always restrain himself before company."

A week later they called on the Couteliers, who were supposed to be the chief noble family in the province. Their property of Remenil adjoined the large town of Cany. The new château, built in the reign of Louis XIV, was hidden in a magnificent park inclosed by walls. The ruins of the old château could be seen on an eminence. They were ushered into a stately reception-room by men-servants in livery. In the middle of the room a sort of column held a large bowl of Sèvres ware, and on the pedestal of the column an autograph letter from the King, under glass, requested the Marquis Leopold-Hervé-Joseph-Germer de Varneville de Rollebosc de Coutelier to receive this gift from his sovereign.

Jeanne and Julien were looking at this royal gift when the Marquis and Marquise entered the room.

They were very ceremonious people, whose sentiments, and words seemed always to be on stilts. They spoke without waiting for an answer, smiling complacently, appearing always to be fulfilling the duty, as imposed on them by their station, of showing civilities to the lesser nobility of the region.

Jeanne and Julien, somewhat taken aback, endeavored to be agreeable; but, although they felt too embarrassed to remain very long, they did not know exactly how to take their leave. The Marquise herself put an end to the visit naturally and

simply by bringing the conversation to a close, like a queen giving a dismissal.

On the way home Julien said: "If you like, we will make this our first and last call; the Fourvilles are good enough for me."

Jeanne was of the same opinion. December passed slowly, and the shut-in life began again as in the previous year. But Jeanne did not find it wearisome, as she was always taken up with Paul, at whom Julien looked askance, uneasy and annoyed. Often, when the mother held the child in her arms, kissing it frantically, as women embrace their children, she would hold it up to its father, saying: "Give him a kiss; one would suppose you did not love him."

He would barely brush with his lips the child's smooth forehead, walking all round it, as if he did not wish to touch the restless little fists. Then he would walk away abruptly, as if from something distasteful.

The Mayor, the doctor, and the *curé* came to dinner occasionally; and sometimes the Fourvilles, with whom they were becoming more and more intimate. The Count appeared to worship Paul. He held him on his knees during the whole visit, and sometimes during the whole afternoon, playing with him and amusing him, and kissing him tenderly, as mothers do. He always lamented that he had no children of his own.

The Countess Gilberte again mentioned the rides they were to take together. Jeanne, a little weary of the monotonous days and nights, was quite happy in anticipation of these plans, and for a week amused herself in making a riding-habit.

They always set out two and two, the Countess

and Julien ahead, the Count and Jeanne a hundred feet behind them, talking quietly, like good friends, for such they had become through the sympathy of their straightforward minds and simple hearts. The others often spoke in a low tone, sometimes bursting into laughter, and looking quickly at each other, as if their eyes were expressing what they dared not utter. Then they would suddenly set off at a gallop, impelled by a desire to flee, to ride away, far away.

Then Gilberte would seem to be growing irritable. Her sharp voice, borne on the breeze, occasionally reached the ears of the loitering couple. The Count would smile and say to Jeanne: "She does not always get out of bed on the right side, that wife of mine."

One evening, as they were coming home, the Countess was teasing her mount, spurring it, and then checking it abruptly.

They heard Julien say several times: "Take care, take care! you will be thrown."

"So much the worse," she replied; "it does not concern you," in a hard, clear tone that resounded across the fields as if the words hung in the air.

The animal reared, plunged, and champed the bit. The Count, uneasy, shouted: "Be careful, Gilberte!" Then, as if in defiance, with one of those impulses of a woman whom nothing can stop, she struck her horse brutally between the ears. The animal reared in anger, pawed the air with his front hoofs, and, landing again on his feet, gave a bound and darted across the plain at full speed.

First it crossed the meadow, then, plunging into a plowed field, it kicked up the damp, rich earth behind it, going so fast that one could hardly dis-

tinguish its rider. Julien remained transfixed with astonishment, calling out in despair: "Madame! Madame!" but the Count was annoyed, and, bending forward on his heavy mount, he urged it forward and set out at such a pace, spurring it on with his voice, gestures, and spur, that the huge horseman seemed to be carrying the heavy beast between his legs and to be lifting it up as if to fly. They went at incredible speed, straight ahead; and Jeanne saw the outlines of the wife and the husband fleeing, diminishing, and disappearing in the distance, as if they were two birds pursuing each other to the verge of the horizon.

Julien, approaching Jeanne slowly, murmured angrily: "I think she is mad to-day." And they set out together to follow their friends, who were now hidden by the rising ground.

At the end of about a quarter of an hour they saw them returning and presently joined them. The Count, perspiring, his face red, but smiling, happy and triumphant, was holding his wife's trembling horse in his iron grasp. Gilberte was pale, her face sad and drawn, and she was leaning one hand on her husband's shoulder as if she were about to faint. Jeanne understood now that the Count loved her madly.

After this, the Countess seemed happier for some months than she had ever been. She came to The Poplars more frequently, laughed continually, and kissed Jeanne impulsively. One might have said that some mysterious charm had come into her life. Her husband also was quite happy and never took his eyes off her. He said to Jeanne one evening: "We are very happy just now. Gilberte never has been so charming as now. She never is out of humor, never gets angry. I feel that she loves me; until now I was not sure of it."

Julien also seemed changed and no longer impatient; it was as if the friendship between the two families had brought peace and happiness to both.

The spring was singularly early and mild. Everything seemed to be coming to life beneath the quickening rays of the sun. Jeanne was vaguely troubled at this awakening of nature. Memories came to her of the early days of her love; not that her love for Julien was renewed; that was over forever. But all her being, caressed by the breeze, filled with the fragrance of spring, was disturbed, as if in response to some invisible and tender appeal. She loved to be alone, to give herself up in the sunlight to all kinds of vague and calm enjoyment that did not necessitate thinking.

One morning, as she was in a reverie, a vision came to her, a swift vision of the sunlit nook amid the dark foliage in the little wood near Étretat. It was there that she had for the first time trembled, when beside the young man who then loved her. It was there that he had uttered for the first time the timid desire of his heart. It was there, also, that she thought she had suddenly reached the radiant future of her hopes. She wished to see that wood

again, to make a sort of sentimental and superstitious pilgrimage, as if a return to this spot might somehow change the current of her life.

Julien had been gone since daybreak, she knew not whither. She ordered to be saddled the little white horse which she sometimes rode, and she set out. It was one of those days when nothing seemed stirring, not a blade of grass, not a leaf. All seemed wrapped in a golden mist beneath the blazing sun. Jeanne walked her horse, soothed and happy.

She descended into the valley which leads to the sea, between the great arches in the cliff that are called the Gates of Étretat, and slowly reached the wood. The sunlight was streaming through the still scanty foliage. She wandered about the little paths, looking for the spot.

Just then, as she was traversing one of the longer paths, she perceived at the farther end of it two horses tied to a tree, and recognized them at once; they belonged to Gilberte and Julien. The loneliness of the place was beginning to be irksome to her, and she was pleased at this chance meeting, and whipped up her horse.

When she reached the two patient animals, which were probably accustomed to these long halts, she called. There was no reply. A woman's glove and two riding-whips lay on the trampled grass. So they had no doubt sat down there a while, and then had walked away, leaving their horses tied.

She waited a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes, surprised, not understanding what could be keeping them. She had dismounted, and sat there leaning against a tree-trunk. Suddenly a thought came to her as she glanced again at the glove, the whips, and the two horses left tied; and she sprang to her

saddle with an irresistible desire to make her escape.

She set off at a gallop for The Poplars. She was turning things over in her mind, trying to reason, to put two and two together, to compare facts. How was it that she had not suspected this sooner? How was it that she had not noticed anything? How was it she had not guessed the reason of Julien's frequent absences, the renewal of his former attention to his appearance, and the improvement in his temper? She now recalled Gilberte's nervous abruptness, her exaggerated affection, and the kind of beaming happiness in which she seemed to exist latterly, which so pleased the Count.

She reined in her horse as she wished to think, and the quick pace disturbed her ideas.

As soon as the first emotion was over, she became almost calm, without jealousy or hatred, but filled with contempt. She hardly gave Julien a thought; nothing he might do could astonish her. But the double treachery of the Countess, her friend, disgusted her. Every one, then, was treacherous, untruthful, and false. Tears came to her eyes. One sometimes mourns lost illusions as deeply as one mourns the death of a friend.

She resolved, however, to act as if she knew nothing, to close the doors of her heart to all ordinary affection, to love no one but Paul and her parents, and to endure all others with an undisturbed countenance.

As soon as she reached home she ran to her son, carried him up to her room, and kissed him passionately for an hour.

Julien came home to dinner, smiling and attentive, and appeared interested as he asked: "Are not father and 'little mother' coming this year?"

She was so grateful to him for this little attention that she almost forgave him for the discovery she had made in the wood; and she was filled all of a sudden with an intense desire to see without delay the two beings in the world whom she loved next to Paul, and passed the whole evening writing to them to hasten their coming.

They promised to be there on the twentieth of May, and it was then the seventh.

She awaited their arrival with growing impatience, as if she felt, in addition to her filial affection, the need of opening her own heart to other hearts, to talk with frankness to pure-minded people, devoid of all imfamy, all of whose life, actions, and thoughts had ever been upright.

What she now felt was a sort of moral isolation, amid all this immorality; and, although she had learned suddenly to dissimulate, although she received the Countess with outstretched hand and smiling lips, she felt this consciousness of hollowness, this contempt for humanity increasing and enveloping her; and the petty gossip of the district gave her a still greater disgust, a still lower opinion of her fellow creatures.

The immorality of the peasants shocked her, and this warm spring seemed to stir the sap in human beings as well as in plants. Jeanne did not belong to the race of peasants, who are dominated by their lower instincts. Julien one day awakened her aversion anew by telling her a coarse story that had been told to him, which he considered very amusing.

When the traveling carriage stopped at the door and the happy face of the Baron appeared at the window, Jeanne was stirred with so deep an emotion, such a tumultuous feeling of affection as she

never had experienced before. But when she saw her mother she was shocked, and almost fainted. The Baroness in six months had aged ten years. Her heavy cheeks had grown flabby and purple, as if the blood were congested; her eyes were dim, and she could no longer move about unless supported under each arm. Her breathing was difficult and wheezing, and affected those near her with a painful sensation.

When Jeanne had taken them to their room, she retired to her own in order to weep unseen. Then she went to seek her father, and, throwing herself into his arms, she exclaimed, her eyes still full of tears: "Oh, how mother is changed! What is the matter with her—tell me, what is the matter?"

The Baron was much surprised and replied: "Do you think so? What an idea! Why, no. I never have been away from her; I assure you that I do not think she looks ill. She always looks like that."

That evening Julien said to his wife: "Your mother is in a very feeble condition. I think she will not live long."

Jeanne burst out sobbing, and he became annoyed.

"Come, I did not say there was no hope for her. You always exaggerate everything. She is changed, that is all. She is no longer young."

The Baroness was not able to walk any distance, and went out for only half an hour each day to take one turn in her avenue, and then she would sit on the bench. When she felt unequal to walking to the end of her avenue, she would say: "Let us stop; my hypertrophy is breaking my legs to-day." She seldom laughed now as she had laughed the previous

year at anything that amused her, but only smiled. As she could see to read excellently, she passed hours reading *Corinne,* or Lamartine's *Meditations.* Then she would ask for her drawer of "souvenirs," and emptying her cherished letters on her lap, she would place the drawer on a chair beside her and put back, one by one, her relics, after she had slowly gone over them. When she was alone, quite alone, she would kiss some of them, as one kisses in secret a lock of hair of a loved one passed away.

Sometimes Jeanne, coming in abruptly, would find her weeping and would exclaim: "What is the matter, little mother?" And the Baroness, sighing deeply, would reply: "It is my relics that make me cry. They stir remembrances that were so delightful, and that are now past forever, and one is reminded of persons whom one has forgotten and recalls once more. You seem to see them, to hear them, and it affects you strangely. You will feel this later."

When the Baron happened to come in at such times, he would say gently: "Jeanne, dearie, take my advice and burn your letters, all of them, your mother's, mine, every one's. There is nothing more dreadful, when one is growing old, than to look back to one's youth."

But Jeanne also kept her letters and was preparing a chest of "relics," in obedience to a sort of hereditary instinct of dreamy sentimentality, although she differed from her mother in every other way.

The Baron was obliged to leave them some days later, as he had some business that called him away.

One afternoon Jeanne took Paul in her arms and went out for a walk. She was sitting on a bank

gazing at the infant, at whom she seemed to be looking for the first time. She could hardly imagine him grown up, walking with a steady step, with a beard on his face, and talking in a deep voice. She heard some one calling, and raised her head. Marius came running toward her.

"Madame, Madame la Baronne is very bad."

A cold chill seemed to run down her back as she started up and walked hurriedly toward the house.

As she approached she saw a number of persons grouped around the plane tree. She darted forward, and saw her mother lying on the ground with two pillows under her head. Her face was black, her eyes were closed, and her breathing, which had been difficult for twenty years, was now quite hushed. The nurse took the child out of Jeanne's arms and carried it away.

Jeanne, with drawn, anxious face, asked: "What happened? How did she come to fall? Go for the doctor, somebody." Turning round, she saw the old priest, who had heard of the trouble in some way. He offered his services and began rolling up the sleeves of his cassock. But vinegar, eau de Cologne, and rubbing the invalid proved ineffectual.

"She should be undressed and put to bed," said the priest.

Joseph Couillard, the farmer, was there, and old Simon and Ludivine. With the assistance of the Abbé Picot, they tried to lift the Baroness; but after an attempt they were obliged to bring a large easy-chair from the drawing-room and place her in it. In this way they managed to get her into the house and then upstairs, where they laid her on her bed.

Joseph Couillard set out in hot haste for the doctor. As the priest was departing to get the

holy oil, the nurse, who had "scented a death," as servants say, and was on the spot, whispered to him: "Do not put yourself out, Monsieur; she is dead; I know all about these things."

Jeanne, beside herself, entreated them to do something. The priest thought it best to pronounce the absolution.

They watched for two hours beside this lifeless, discolored body. Jeanne, on her knees, was sobbing in an agony of grief.

When the door opened and the doctor appeared, Jeanne darted toward him, stammering out what she knew of the accident, but, seeing the nurse exchange a meaning glance with the doctor, she stopped to ask him: "Is it serious? Do you think it is serious?"

He said presently: "I am afraid—I am afraid —it is all over. Be brave, be brave!"

Jeanne, extending her arms, threw herself on her mother's body. Just then Julien came in. He stood amazed, visibly annoyed, without any exclamation of sorrow, any appearance of grief; taken so unawares that he had not time to prepare a suitable expression of countenance. He muttered: "I was expecting it; I felt that the end was near." Then he took out his handkerchief, wiped his eyes, knelt down, crossed himself, and, rising to his feet, attempted to raise his wife. But she was clasping the dead body and kissing it, and it became necessary to carry her away. She appeared to be out of her mind.

At the end of an hour she was allowed to come back. There was no longer any hope. The room was arranged as a death chamber. Julien and the priest were talking in a low tone near the window. It was growing dark. The priest come over to

Jeanne and took her hands, trying to console her. He spoke of the dead woman, praised her in pious phrases, and offered to pass the night in prayer beside her body.

But Jeanne refused, amid convulsive sobs. She wished to be alone, quite alone on this last night of farewell.

Julien came forward: "But you must not do it; we will stay together."

She shook her head, unable to speak. At last she said: "It is my mother, my mother! I wish to watch beside her alone."

The doctor murmured: "Let her do as she pleases; the nurse can stay in the adjoining room."

The priest and Julien consented, more interested in obtaining their own rest. Then Abbé Picot knelt down in his turn, and as he rose and left the room he said: "She was a saint!" in the same tone as he said "*Dominus vobiscum.*"

The Vicomte, in his ordinary tone, then asked: "Are you not going to eat something?"

Jeanne did not reply, not knowing he was speaking to her; and he repeated: "You had better eat something to keep up your strength." She replied in a bewildered manner: "Send at once for papa." Julien went out of the room to send some one on horseback to Rouen.

Jeanne remained plunged in a sort of stupor of grief, seeing nothing, feeling nothing, understanding nothing. She only wanted to be alone. Julien came back; he had dined, and asked her again: "Won't you take something?"

She shook her head.

He sat down with an air of resignation rather than sadness, without speaking, and they sat there

silent, till at length Julien arose, and, approaching Jeanne, said: "Would you like to stay alone now?"

She took his hand impulsively and replied: "Oh, yes, leave me!"

He kissed her forehead, murmuring: "I will come in and see you from time to time." He then went out with the Widow Dentu, who rolled her easy-chair into the next room.

Jeanne shut the door and opened the windows wide; she felt the soft breath from the mown hay that lay in the moonlight on the lawn. It seemed to harrow her feelings like an ironical remark.

She went back to the bed, took one of the cold, inert hands, and looked at her mother earnestly. She seemed to be sleeping more peacefully than she had ever slept, and the pale flame of the tapers, which flickered at every breath, made her face appear alive, as if her features had stirred. Jeanne remembered all the little incidents of her childhood; the visits of "little mother" to the *parloir* of the convent; the manner in which she handed her a little paper bag of cakes; a multitude of little details, little acts, little caresses, words, intonations, familiar gestures, the creases at the corner of her eyes when she laughed, the deep sigh she gave when she sat down.

And she stood there looking at her, repeating half mechanically: "She is dead!" and all the horror of the word became real to her. It was mamma lying there—"little mother," Mamma Adelaide, who was dead. She never would move about again, nor speak, nor laugh, nor sit at dinner opposite "little father." She never would again say "Good morning, Jeannette." She was dead!

She fell on her knees in a paroxysm of despair,

her hands clutching the sheet, her face buried in the covers, as she cried in a heartrending tone: "Oh, mamma! my poor mamma!" Then, feeling that she was losing her reason as she had on the night when she fled across the snow, she rose and ran to the window to inhale the fresh air. The soothing calmness of the night entered her soul, and she began to weep quietly.

Presently she turned back into the room and sat down again beside her mother. Other remembrances came to her: those of her own life—Rosalie, Gilberte, the bitter disillusions of her heart. Everything, then, was only misery, grief, unhappiness, and death. Every one tried to deceive, every one lied, every one made one suffer and weep. Where could one find a little rest and happiness? In another existence, no doubt, when the soul is freed from the trials of earth. And she began to ponder on this insoluble mystery.

A tender and curious thought came to her mind: it was to read over in this last watch, as if they were a litany, the old letters that her mother loved. It seemed to her that she was about to perform a delicate and sacred duty which would give pleasure to "little mother" in the other world.

She rose, opened the writing-desk, and took from the lower drawer ten little packages of yellow letters, tied and arranged in order, side by side. She placed them all on the bed over her mother's heart, from a sort of sentiment, and began to read them. They were old letters that savored of a former century. The first began: "My dear little granddaughter;" then again, "My dear little girl," "My darling," "My dearest daughter;" then "My dear child," "My dear Adelaide," "My

dear daughter;" according to the periods—childhood, youth, or young womanhood. They were full of little insignificant details and tender words, about a thousand little matters, those simple but important events of home life, so petty to outsiders: "Father has a cold; poor Hortense burned her finger; the cat Croquerat is dead; they have cut down the pine tree at the right of the gate; mother lost her prayerbook on the way home from church; she thinks it was stolen."

All these details affected her; they seemed like revelations, as if she had suddenly entered the past, secret heart-life of "little mother." She looked at her lying there, and suddenly began to read aloud, to read to the dead, as if to distract, to console her.

And the dead woman appeared to be pleased.

Jeanne tossed the letters as she read them to the foot of the bed. She untied another package. It was a new handwriting. She read: "I cannot do without your caresses. I love you so that I am almost crazy."

That was all; no signature.

She put back the letter without understanding its meaning; the address was certainly "Madame la Baronne Le Perthuis des Vauds."

Then she opened another: "Come this evening as soon as he goes out; we shall have an hour together. I worship you!" In another: "I passed the night longing in vain for you, longing to look into your eyes, to press my lips to yours, and I am insane enough to throw myself from the window at the thought that you are another's . . ."

Jeanne was perfectly bewildered. What did that mean? To whom, for whom, from whom, were these words of love?

She went on reading, coming across fresh impassioned declarations, appointments with warnings as to prudence, and always at the end the words: "Be sure to burn this letter."

At last she opened an ordinary note, accepting an invitation to dinner, but in the same handwriting and signed: "Paul d'Ennemare," whom the Baron called, whenever he spoke of him: "My poor old Paul," and whose wife had been the Baroness's dearest friend.

Then a suspicion, which immediately became a certainty, flashed across Jeanne's mind. He had been her mother's lover!

Almost beside herself, she suddenly threw aside these infamous letters as she would have thrown off some venomous reptile, ran to the window, and began to cry piteously; then, collapsing completely, she sank down beside the wall and, hiding her face in the curtain so that no one should hear her, sobbed bitterly as if in hopeless despair.

She would have remained thus probably all night had she not heard a noise in the adjoining room that made her start to her feet. It might be her father! And all the letters were lying on the floor! He would have to open only one of them to know all! Her father!

She darted into the other room, and, seizing the letters in handfuls, she threw them all into the fireplace, those of her grandparents as well as those of the lover; some that she had not looked at and some that had remained tied up in the drawers of the desk. She then took one of the tapers that burned beside the bed, and set fire to this pile of letters. When they were reduced to ashes, she went back to the open window, as if she no longer dared

to sit beside the dead, and began to cry again with her face in her hands: "Oh, my poor mamma! oh, my poor mamma!"

The stars were paling; it was the cool hour that precedes the dawn. The moon was sinking on the horizon and turning the sea to mother-of-pearl. The recollection of the night she passed at the window when she first came to The Poplars came to Jeanne's mind. How far away it seemed! How everything was changed! How different the future now seemed!

The sky was becoming pink, a joyous, love-inspiring, enchanting pink. She looked at it in surprise, as at some phenomenon, this radiant break of day, and asked herself whether it were possible that on a planet where such dawns were found there should be neither joy nor happiness.

A noise at the door made her start. It was Julien. "Well," he said, "are you not very tired?"

She murmured: "No," happy at being no longer alone. "Go and rest now," he said. She kissed her mother, a long, sad kiss; then she went to her room.

The next day passed in the usual attentions to the dead. The Baron arrived toward evening. He wept for some time.

The funeral took place the following day. After pressing a last kiss on her mother's icy forehead, and seeing the coffin nailed down, Jeanne left the room. The invited guests would soon arrive.

Gilberte was the first to come, and she threw herself sobbing on her friend's shoulder. Women in black presently entered the room one after another, people whom Jeanne did not know. The Marquise

de Coutelier and the Vicomtesse de Briseville embraced her. She suddenly saw Aunt Lison gliding in behind her. She turned round and kissed her tenderly.

Julien came in, dressed all in black, elegant, very important, pleased at seeing so many people. He asked his wife some question in a low tone, and added confidentially: "All the nobility are here; it will be a fine affair." And he walked away, gravely bowing to the ladies. Aunt Lison and the Countess Gilberte alone remained with Jeanne during the service for the dead. The Countess kissed her repeatedly, exclaiming: "My poor dear! my poor dear!"

When the Comte de Fourville came to fetch his wife, he also was weeping, as if for his own mother.

CHAPTER X

RETRIBUTION

THE following days were very sad and dreary, as they always are when there has been a death in the house. And, in addition, Jeanne was crushed at the thought of what she had discovered; her last shred of confidence had been destroyed with the destruction of her faith. "Little father," after a short stay, went away to try and distract his thoughts from his grief, and the large house, whose former masters were leaving it from time to time, resumed its usual calm and monotonous course.

Then Paul fell ill, and Jeanne was almost beside herself, not sleeping for ten days, and hardly tasting food. He recovered, but she was haunted by the idea that he might die. Then what should she do? What would become of her? And there gradually stole into her heart the hope that she might have another child. She

dreamed of it, became obsessed with the idea. She longed to realize her old dream of seeing two little children around her, a boy and a girl.

But since the affair of Rosalie she and Julien had lived apart. A reconciliation seemed impossible in their present situation. Julien loved some one else; she knew it, and the very thought of suffering his approach filled her with repugnance. She had no one left whom she could consult. She resolved to go and see the Abbé Picot and tell him, under the seal of confession, all that weighed upon her mind in this matter.

He was reading his breviary in his little garden planted with fruit trees when she arrived.

After a few minutes' conversation on different matters, she faltered, her color rising: "I want to confess, Monsieur le curé."

He looked at her in astonishment, as he pushed his spectacles back on his forehead; then he began to laugh. "You surely have no great sins on your conscience." This embarrassed her greatly, and she replied: "No, but I wish to ask your advice on a subject that is so—so—so painful that I dare not mention it casually."

He at once laid aside his jovial manner and assumed his priestly attitude. "Well, my child, I will listen to you in the confessional; come."

But she held back, undecided, restrained by a kind of scruple at speaking of these matters, of which she was half ashamed, in the seclusion of an empty church.

"Or else, no—Monsieur le curé—I might—I might—if you wish, tell you now what brings me here. Let us go and sit over there, in your little arbor."

They walked toward it, and Jeanne tried to think how she could begin. They sat down, and then, as if she were confessing herself, she said: "Father ——" then hesitated, and repeated: "Father——" and was silent from emotion.

He waited, his hands crossed over his paunch. Seeing her embarrassment, he sought to encourage her: "Why, my daughter, one would suppose you were afraid; come, take courage."

She plucked up courage, like a coward who plunges headlong into danger. "Father, I should like to have another child." He did not reply, as he did not understand her. Then she explained, timid and unable to express herself clearly:

"I am all alone in life now; my father and my husband do not get along together; my mother is dead; and—and——" she added with a shudder, "the other day I nearly lost my son! What would have become of me then?"

She was silent. The priest, bewildered, was gazing at her. "Come, get to the point of your subject."

"I wish to have another child," she said. Then he smiled, accustomed to the coarse jokes of the peasants, who were not embarrassed in his presence, and he replied, with a sly motion of his head:

"Well, it seems to me that it depends only on yourself."

She raised her candid eyes to his face, and said, hesitating with confusion: "But—but—you understand that since—since—what you know about—about that maid—my husband and I have lived—have lived quite apart."

Accustomed to the promiscuity and undignified relations of the peasants, he was astonished at the

revelation. Suddenly he thought he guessed at the young woman's real desire, and, looking at her out of the corner of his eye, with a heart full of benevolence and of sympathy for her distress, he said: "Oh, I understand perfectly. I know that your widowhood must be irksome to you. You are young and in good health. It is natural, quite natural."

He smiled, bearing out his easy-going character of a country priest; and, tapping Jeanne lightly on the hand, he said: "That is permissible, very permissible indeed, according to the Commandments. You are married, are you not? Well, then, what is the harm?"

She, in her turn, had not understood his hidden meaning; but as soon as she saw through it she blushed scarlet. Shocked and with tears in her eyes, she exclaimed: "Oh, Monsieur le curé, what are you saying? What are you thinking of? I swear to you—I swear to you——" And sobs choked her words.

He was surprised and sought to console her: "Come, I did not mean to hurt your feelings. I was only joking a little; there is no harm in that when one is decent. But you may rely on me, you may rely on me. I will see Monsieur Julien."

She did not know what to say. She now wished to decline this intervention, which she thought clumsy and dangerous, but she did not dare to do so, and went away hurriedly, faltering: "I am grateful to you, Monsieur le curé."

A week passed. One day at dinner Julien looked at her with a peculiar expression, a certain smiling curve of the lips that she had noticed when he was teasing her. He was even almost ironically gallant

toward her, and as they were walking after dinner in her mother's avenue, he said in a low tone: "We seem to have made up again."

She did not reply, but continued to look on the ground at a sort of track that was almost effaced now that the grass was sprouting anew. They were the footprints of the Baroness, which were vanishing as does a memory. And Jeanne was plunged

in sadness; she felt herself lost in life, far away from every one.

"As for me, I ask nothing better. I was afraid of displeasing you," continued Julien.

The sun was going down, the air was mild. A longing to weep came over Jeanne, one of those needs of unbosoming one's self to a kindred spirit, of unbending and telling one's griefs. A sob rose in her throat; she opened her arms and fell on Julien's breast, and wept. He glanced down in surprise at her head, for he could not see her face, which was hidden on his shoulder. He supposed

that she still loved him, and placed a condescending kiss on the back of her head.

They entered the house, and he followed her to her room. And thus they resumed their former relations, he as a not unpleasant duty, and she merely tolerating him.

She soon noticed, however, that his manner had changed, and one day with her lips to his she murmured: "Why are you not the same as you used to be?"

"Because I do not want any more children," he said jokingly.

She started. "Why not?"

He appeared greatly surprised. "Eh, what's that you say? Are you crazy? No, indeed! One is enough, always crying and bothering every one. Another baby! No, thank you!"

She clasped him round the neck, kissing him and coaxing him, and said gently: "Oh, do let me have another child!"

But he grew angry. "Why, you must be out of your mind. Please spare me this nonsense."

She decided at last to go and see the Abbé Picot once more.

He was finishing his breakfast. As soon as he saw her he exclaimed: "Well?"—anxious to know the result of his mediation.

Setting aside her timidity, she replied at once: "My husband does not wish any more children." The priest turned toward her, quite interested, and asked: "How is that?" Then, with some embarrassment, she replied: "He refuses to let me become a mother."

The priest understood, and after reflecting a few moments, in a quiet tone, as if he were telling of

the good condition of the crops, he outlined for her a skilful plan of behavior, omitting no detail.

"You have only one way, my dear child, and that is to make him believe that you are *enceinte*. Then he will be off his guard, and will commit himself."

She blushed up to the eyes; but, determined to let nothing stop her, she persisted: "But—if he should not believe me?"

The priest was familiar with all the methods of managing and holding men. "Tell every one you are in that condition; he will end by believing it himself."

He then added, as if to absolve his conscience for this stratagem: "It is your right. The Church does not allow any relations between the sexes except with a view to procreation."

She followed this crafty advice, and two weeks later announced to Julien that she believed herself to be *enceinte*. He gave a start. "Impossible! It is not true."

"Wait a little and you will see," she replied.

At the end of a month she told the news to every one, far and wide, with the exception of the Comtesse Gilberte, from reasons of modesty and delicacy.

What the priest had foreseen finally came to pass. She became *enceinte*. Then, filled with an unspeakable happiness, she locked her door every night when she retired, vowing herself from henceforth to eternal chastity, in gratitude to the vague divinity she adored.

She was now almost happy again. Her children would grow up and love her; she would grow old quietly, happy and contented, without troubling herself about her husband.

Toward the end of September, the Abbé Picot called on a visit of ceremony to introduce his successor, a young priest, very thin, very short, with an emphatic way of talking, and with dark circles round his sunken eyes.

The old priest had been appointed Dean of Gonderville.

Jeanne was really sorry to lose the old man, who had been associated with all her recollections as a young woman. He had married her, baptized Paul, and buried the Baroness. She could not imagine Étouvent without Abbé Picot and his paunch passing along by the farms, and she loved him because he was cheerful and natural.

But he did not seem very cheerful at the thought of his promotion. "It is a wrench, it is a wrench, Madame la Comtesse," he said; "I have been here for eighteen years. Oh, the place does not bring in much, and is not wealthy! The men have no more religion than they need, and the women, look you, the women have no morals. But, nevertheless, I loved it."

The new priest appeared impatient, and said abruptly: "When I am here all that will have to be changed." He looked like an angry boy, thin and frail in his somewhat worn though clean cassock.

Abbé Picot looked at him sidewise, as he did when he was in a joking mood, and said: "You see, Abbé, in order to prevent those happenings, you will have to chain up your parishioners; and even that would not be of much use." The little priest replied sharply: "We shall see." And the older man smiled as he took a pinch of snuff, and said: "Age will calm you down, Abbé, and experience

also. You will drive away from the church the remaining faithful ones, and that is all the good it will do. In this district they are religious, but pig-headed; be careful. Faith, when I see a girl come to confess who looks rather stout I say to myself: 'She is bringing me a new parishioner,' and I try to get her married. You cannot prevent them from making mistakes; but you can go and look for the man, and prevent him from deserting the mother. Get them married, Abbé, get them married, and do not trouble yourself about anything else."

"We think differently," said the young priest rudely; "it is useless to insist." And Abbé Picot once more began to regret his village, the sea which he saw from his parsonage, the little valleys where he walked while repeating his breviary, glancing up at the boats as they passed.

As the two priests took their leave, the old man kissed Jeanne, who was on the verge of tears.

A week later Abbé Tolbiac called again. He spoke of reforms he intended to accomplish, as a prince might have spoken on taking possession of a kingdom. Then he requested the Vicomtesse not to miss the services on Sunday, and to communicate at all the festivals. "You and I," he said, "are at the head of the district; we must rule it and always set them an example to follow. We must be of one accord, so that we may be powerful and respected. The Church and the château in joining forces will make the peasants obey and fear us."

Jeanne's religion was all sentiment; she had all a woman's dream-faith, and if she attended at all to her religious duties it was from a habit acquired at the convent, the Baron's advanced ideas having long since overthrown her convictions. Abbé Picot

contented himself with what observances she gave him, and never blamed her. But his successor, not seeing her at mass the preceding Sunday, had come, uneasy and stern.

She did not wish to break with the parsonage, and promised, making up her mind to be assiduous in attendance the first few weeks, out of politeness.

Little by little, however, she got into the habit of going to church, and came under the influence of this delicate, upright, and dictatorial priest. A mystic, he appealed to her in his enthusiasm and zeal. He set in vibration in her soul the chord of religious poetry that all women possess. His unyielding austerity, his disgust for ordinary human interests, his love of God, his youthful and untutored inexperience, his harsh words, and his inflexible will gave Jeanne an idea of the stuff martyrs were made of; and she let herself be carried away, all disillusioned as she was, by the fanaticism of this child, the minister of God.

He led her to Christ, the consoler, showing her how the joy of religion will calm all sorrow; and she knelt at the confessional, humbling herself, feeling herself small and weak in presence of this priest, who appeared to be about fifteen.

He was, however, very soon detested in all the countryside. Inflexibly severe toward himself, he was implacably intolerant toward others, and the one thing that especially roused his wrath and indignation was love. The young men and girls looked at each other slyly across the church, and the old peasants, who like to joke about such things, disapproved of his severity. All the parish was in a ferment. Soon the young men all stopped going to church.

The *curé* dined at the château every Thursday, and often came during the week to chat with his penitent. She became enthusiastic, like himself, talked about spiritual matters, handling all the antique and complicated arsenal of religious controversy.

They walked together along the Baroness's avenue, talking of Christ and the apostles, the Virgin Mary and the fathers of the Church as if they were personally acquainted with them.

Julien treated the new priest with great respect, saying constantly: "That priest suits me; he does not practise what he does not preach." And he went to confession and communion, setting a fine example. He now went to the Fourvilles' nearly every day, gunning with the husband, who never was happy without him, and riding with the Countess, in spite of rain and storm. The Count said: "They are crazy about riding, but it does my wife good."

The Baron returned to the château about the middle of November. He was changed, aged, faded, filled with a deep sadness. His love for his daughter seemed to have gained in strength, as if these few months of dreary solitude had aggravated his need of affection, confidence, and tenderness. Jeanne did not tell him about her new ideas and her friendship for the Abbé Tolbiac. The first time he saw the priest he conceived a great aversion to him. And when Jeanne asked him that evening how he liked him, he replied: "That man is an inquisitor! He must be very dangerous."

When he learned from the peasants, whose friend he was, of the harshness and violence of the young priest, of the kind of persecution which he carried

on against all human and natural instincts, he developed a hatred toward him. He himself was one of the old race of natural philosophers who bowed the knee to a sort of pantheistic divinity, and shrank from the Catholic conception of a God with *bourgeois* instincts, Jesuitical wrath, and tyrannical revenge. To him reproduction was the great law of nature, and he began from farm to farm an ardent campaign against this intolerant priest, the persecutor of life.

Jeanne, very much worried, prayed to the Lord, entreated her father; but he always replied: "We must fight such men as that; it is our duty and our right. They are not human." And he repeated, shaking his long white locks: "They are not human; they understand nothing, nothing, nothing! They are moving in a morbid dream; they are antiphysical." And he pronounced the word "antiphysical" as if it were a malediction.

The priest knew who his enemy was, but, as he wished to remain ruler of the château and of Jeanne, he temporized, sure of final victory. He was also haunted by a fixed idea. He had discovered by chance the amours of Julien and Gilberte, and he desired to put a stop to them at all costs.

He came to see Jeanne one day and, after a long conversation on spiritual matters, he asked her to give her aid in helping him to fight, to put an end to the evil in her own family, in order to save two souls that were in danger.

She did not understand, and did not wish to know. He replied: "The hour has not arrived; I shall see you some other time." And he left abruptly.

The winter was drawing to a close, a deadly win-

ter, as they say in the country, damp and mild. The priest called again some days later and hinted mysteriously at one of those shameless intrigues between persons whose conduct should be irreproachable. It was the duty, he said, of those who were aware of the facts to use every means to bring it to an end. He took Jeanne's hand and adjured her to open her eyes and understand and lend him her aid.

This time she understood, but she was silent, terrified at the thought of all that might result in the house that was now peaceful, and she pretended not to understand. Then he spoke out clearly.

She faltered: "What do you wish me to do, Monsieur le curé?"

"Anything, rather than permit this infamy. Anything, I say! Leave him. Flee from this impure house!"

"But I have no money; and then I have no longer any courage; and, besides, how can I go without any proof? I have not the right to do so."

The priest arose, trembling: "That is cowardice, Madame. I am mistaken in you. You are unworthy of God's mercy!"

She fell on her knees: "Oh, I pray you not to leave me; tell me what to do!"

"Open Monsieur de Fourville's eyes," he said abruptly. "It is his place to break up this intrigue."

This idea filled her with terror. "Why, he would kill them! And I should be guilty of denouncing them! Oh, never that, never!"

He raised his hand as if to curse her in his fury: "Remain in your shame and your crime; for you are more guilty than they. You are the

complaisant wife! There is nothing more for me to do here." And he went off so furious that he trembled all over.

She followed him, distracted, and ready to do as he suggested. But he strode along rapidly, shaking his large blue umbrella in his rage. He perceived Julien standing outside the gate superintending the lopping of the trees; so he turned to the left to go across the Couillard farm, and he said: "Let me alone, Madame; I have nothing further to say."

Right in his road, in the middle of the farmyard, a group of children, those of the house and some neighbors' children, were standing around the kennel of Mirza, the dog, looking curiously at something with silent and concentrated attention. In the midst of them stood the Baron, his hands behind his back, also looking on with curiosity. One would have taken him for a schoolmaster. When he saw the priest approaching he moved away, so as not to have to meet him and speak to him.

Jeanne was entreating him to give her a few days for reflection, and then if he came back to the château she would tell him what she had done and they could take counsel together.

They had reached the group of children, and the *curé* drew near to see what was interesting them so intensely. It was a litter of puppies that had been born. Five little ones were already crawling around their mother, who was licking them tenderly as she lay on her side, exhausted. Just as the priest bent over, a sixth little creature appeared. All the youngsters, wild with delight, clapped their hands and cried: "Here is another! Here is another!" It was a joke to them, a joke played by nature, into which nothing impure entered. They

watched the birth of these puppies as they would have looked at apples falling from a tree.

The priest stood there amazed at first; then, seized with an irresistible fury, he lifted his immense umbrella and began to hit the children right and left on the head, with all his might. The terrified youngsters fled as fast as their legs could carry them, and he suddenly found himself alone beside the poor dog, who tried to get on her feet. But he did not give her a chance to do so, for, perfectly beside himself, he began to rain down blows on her. As she was chained she could not escape, and moaned frightfully as she struggled beneath the blows. He actually broke his umbrella. Then, having no other weapon, he stood on top of her, stamping on her in his frenzy, crushing her, killing her. Another little puppy was born under the pressure, and he stamped his heel frantically on the little body that lay amid the other squealing, newborn creatures, who were blindly crawling about, seeking their mother's teats.

Jeanne had taken to her heels; but the priest suddenly felt a hand grip his neck; a box on the ears made his beretta fly off; and the Baron, in his wrath, dragged him to the gate and flung him into the road. When he went back to the spot he found his daughter on her knees sobbing amid the little puppies and gathering them into her skirt. He walked rapidly toward her, gesticulating and exclaiming: "That is he, that is he, the man in the cassock! Did you see him just now?"

The farmers had come running, and they all looked at the poor mangled beast. Mother Couillard exclaimed: "Is it possible that any one can be such a brute?"

But Jeanne had picked up the seven little dogs and said she would raise them.

They tried to make them drink milk, but three died the next day. Then old Simon scoured the country to find a mother dog to nurse them. He could not find one, but returned with a cat, declaring that she would do as well. Three of the little ones were drowned and the remaining one was confided to the care of this nurse of an alien race. She at once adopted it, and nursed it. It was weaned at the end of a fortnight, that the cat might not become weak, and Jeanne undertook to feed it. She called it Toto. The Baron insisted on changing its name and called it "Massacre."

The priest did not call again; but the following Sunday from the pulpit he hurled imprecations, curses, and threats against the château, anathematizing the Baron, and making veiled allusions, but timidly, to Julien's latest intrigue. The Vicomte was furious, but the dread of a shocking scandal kept him silent. At each service thereafter the priest declared his indignation, predicting the approach of the hour when God would smite all his enemies.

Julien wrote a firm but respectful letter to the archbishop, and the priest was threatened with suspension. He was silent thereafter.

Gilberte and Julien now frequently met him during their rides reading his breviary, but they turned aside so as not to pass him by. Spring had come and reawakened their love. As the foliage was still sparse and the grass damp, they used to meet in a shepherd's movable hut that had been deserted since autumn. But one day when they were leaving it they saw the Abbé Tol-

biac, almost hidden in the sea-rushes on the slope.

"We must leave our horses in the ravine," said Julien, "as they can be seen from a distance and would betray us." One evening, as they were coming home together to La Vrillette, where they were to dine with the Count, they met the *curé* of Etouvent coming out of the château. He stepped to the side of the road to let them pass, and bowed without their eyes meeting. They were uneasy for a few moments, but soon forgot it.

One afternoon Jeanne was reading beside the fire while a storm of wind was raging outside, when she suddenly perceived Count de Fourville coming on foot at such a pace that she thought some misfortune had happened.

She ran downstairs to meet him, and when she saw him she thought he must be crazy. He wore a large quilted cap that he wore only at home, his hunting jacket, and looked so pale that his red mustache, usually the color of his skin, now seemed like a flame. His eyes were haggard, rolling as if his mind were vacant.

He stammered: "My wife is here, is she not?" Jeanne, losing her presence of mind, replied: "Why, no, I have not seen her to-day."

He sat down as if his legs had given way. He then took off his cap and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief mechanically several times. Then, starting up suddenly, he approached Jeanne, his hands stretched out, his mouth open, as if to speak, to confide some great sorrow to her; then he stopped, looked at her fixedly, and said, as if he were wandering: "But it is your husband—you also——" and he fled, going toward the sea.

Jeanne ran after him, calling him, imploring him

to stop, her heart beating with apprehension as she thought: "He knows all! What will he do? Oh, if only he does not find them!"

But she could not overtake him, and he disregarded her appeals. He went straight ahead without hesitation, straight to his goal. He crossed the ditch; then, stalking through the sea rushes like a giant, he reached the cliff.

Jeanne, standing on the mound covered with trees, followed him with her eyes until he was out of sight; then she went into the house distracted with grief.

He had turned to the right and begun to run. Threatening waves overspread the sea; black clouds were scudding along madly, passing on and followed by others, each of them coming down in a furious downpour. The wind whistled, moaned, laid the grass and the young crops low, and carried away great white birds that looked like specks of foam and bore them far into the land.

The hail that followed beat in the Count's face, filling his ears with noise and his heart with tumult.

Down yonder before him was the deep gorge of the Val de Vaucotte. There was nothing between him and the valley but a shepherd's hut, beside a deserted sheep pasture. Two horses were tied to the shafts of the hut on wheels. What might not happen to one in such a tempest as this?

As soon as he saw them the Count crouched on the ground and crawled along on his hands and knees as far as the lonely hut, hiding himself beneath it that he might not be seen through the cracks. The horses on seeing him became restive. He slowly cut their reins with a knife, which he held open in his hand; and a sudden squall coming up,

the animals fled, frightened at the hail, which rattled on the sloping roof of the wooden hut and made it shake on its wheels.

The Count, kneeling upright, put his eye to the bottom of the door and looked inside. He did not stir; he seemed to be waiting.

A little time elapsed; then he suddenly arose to his feet, covered with mud from head to foot. He frantically pushed back the bolt which closed the hut on the outside, and, seizing the shafts, he began to shake the hut as if he would break it to pieces. Then suddenly he got between the shafts, bending his huge frame, and with a desperate effort dragged it along like an ox, panting as he went. He dragged it, with whoever was in it, toward the steep incline.

Those inside screamed and banged with their fists on the door, not understanding what was going on.

When he reached the top of the cliff he let go the fragile structure, which began to roll down the incline, going ever faster and faster, plunging, stumbling like an animal, and striking the ground with its shafts.

An old beggar hidden in a ditch saw it flying over his head, and heard frightful screams coming from the wooden box.

Suddenly a wheel was wrenched off, and it fell on its side and began to roll like a ball, as a house torn from its foundation might roll from the summit of a mountain. Then, reaching the ledge of the last ravine, it described a circle and, falling to the bottom, burst open as an egg might. It was no sooner smashed on the stones than the old beggar who had seen it going past went down toward it slowly amid the rushes, and with the customary

caution of a peasant, not daring to go directly to the shattered hut, he went to the nearest farm to tell of the accident.

They all ran to look at it, and raised the wreck of the hut. They found two bodies, bruised, crushed, and bleeding. The man's forehead was split open and his whole face crushed. The woman's jaw was hanging, dislocated in one of the jolts, and their shattered limbs were soft as pulp.

"What were they doing in that shanty?" said a woman.

The old beggar then said that they had apparently taken refuge in it to get out of the storm, and that a furious squall must have blown the hut over the cliff. He said he had intended to take shelter there himself, when he saw the horses tied to it, and understood that some one else must be inside. "But for that," he added, in a satisfied tone, "I might have rolled down in it." Some one remarked: "Would not that have been a good thing?"

The old man, in a furious rage, said: "Why would it have been a good thing? Because I am poor and they are rich! Look at them now!" And, trembling, ragged, and dripping with rain, he pointed to the two dead bodies with his hooked stick, and exclaimed: "We are all alike when we get to this."

The Count, as soon as he saw the hut rolling down the steep slope, ran off at full speed through the blinding storm. He ran in this way for several hours, taking short cuts, leaping across ditches, breaking through the hedges, and thus got back home at dusk, not knowing how.

The frightened servants were awaiting his return and told him that the two horses had returned

riderless some little time before, that of Julien following the other one.

Then M. de Fourville reeled, and in a choked voice said: "Something must have happened to them in this dreadful weather. Let every one help to discover them."

He set off himself; but he was no sooner out of sight than he concealed himself in a clump of bushes, watching the road along which she whom he still loved with an almost savage passion was to return dead, dying, or maybe crippled and disfigured forever.

And soon a carriage passed, carrying a strange burden. It stopped at the château, and passed through the gate. It was that! It was She; but a fearful anguish nailed him to the spot—a fear to know the worst, a dread of the truth; and he did not stir, hiding like a hare, starting at the least sound.

He waited thus an hour, two hours perhaps. The vehicle did not come out. He concluded that his wife was expiring; and the thought of seeing her, of meeting her gaze, filled him with so much horror that he suddenly feared to be discovered in his hiding-place, and compelled to return and be present at this agony. He then fled into the thick of the wood. Suddenly it occurred to him that perhaps she might be needing care, that no one probably could properly attend to her; then he returned on his tracks, running breathlessly.

On entering the château he met the gardener and called out to him: "Well?" The man did not dare answer him. Then M. de Fourville almost roared at him: "Is she dead?" and the servant stammered: "Yes, Monsieur le Comte."

He experienced a feeling of immense relief. His

blood seemed to cool and his nerves relaxed somewhat from their extreme tension, and he walked firmly up the steps of his great hallway.

The other wagon had reached The Poplars. Jeanne saw it from afar; she descried the mattress; she guessed that a human form was lying upon it, and understood all. Her emotion was so vivid that she swooned and fell prostrate.

When she regained consciousness, her father was holding her head and bathing her temples with vinegar. He said hesitatingly: "Do you know?" She murmured: "Yes, father." But, when she attempted to rise, she found herself unable to move, so intense was her agony.

That very night she gave birth to a stillborn infant, a girl.

Jeanne saw nothing of the funeral of Julien; she knew nothing of it. She merely noticed at the end of a day or two that Aunt Lison was back; and in the feverish dreams that haunted her she persistently sought to recall when the old maiden lady had left The Poplars, at what period and under what circumstances. She could not make this out, even in her lucid moments, but she was certain of having seen her subsequent to the death of "little mother."

CHAPTER XI

BLIGHTED HOPES

BEING unable to leave her room for three months, Jeanne was so wan and pale that no one thought she would recover. But she picked up by degrees. Her father and Aunt Lison never left her; both had taken up their abode at The Poplars. The shock of Julien's death had left her with a nervous malady. The slightest sound made her faint, and she had long swoons from the most insignificant causes.

She never had asked for the details of Julien's death. What did it matter to her? Did she not know enough already? Every one thought it was an accident, but she knew better, and she kept to herself the secret that tortured her—the knowledge of his infidelity, and the remembrance of the abrupt and terrible visit of the Count on the day of the catastrophe.

And now she was filled with tender, sweet, and melancholy recollections of the brief evidences of love shown her by her husband. She was frequently

thrilled at sudden memories of him, and she seemed to see him as he was when they were betrothed, and as she had known him in the hours passed in the sunlight in Corsica. All memory of his faults diminished, all recollection of his harshness vanished; his very infidelities appeared less glaring in the widening separation of the closed tomb. And Jeanne, pervaded by a sort of posthumous gratitude for the man who had held her in his arms, forgave all the suffering he had caused her, to remember only the moments of happiness they had passed together. Then, as time went on and month followed month, covering all her grief and reminiscences with forgetfulness, she devoted herself entirely to her son.

He became the idol, the one thought of the three beings who surrounded him, and he ruled as a despot. A kind of jealousy even arose among his slaves; Jeanne watched with anxiety the warm kisses he gave his grandfather after a ride on his knee; and Aunt Lison, neglected by him as she had been by every one else, and treated often like a servant by this little tyrant who could scarcely speak as yet, would go to her room and weep as she compared the slight affection he showed her with the fond kisses he gave his mother and the Baron.

Two years passed quietly, and at the beginning of the third winter it was decided that they should go to Rouen to live until spring, and the whole family set out. But on their arrival in the old damp house that had been shut up for some time Paul had such a severe attack of bronchitis that his three relatives in despair declared he could not do without the air of The Poplars. They took him back there, and he recovered.

Then began a series of quiet, monotonous years. Always around the little one they went into raptures at everything he did. His mother called him Paulet, and as he could not pronounce the word he said "Poulet," which amused them immensely, and the nickname of Poulet stuck to him.

The favorite occupation of his "three mothers," as the Baron called his relatives, was to see how much he had grown, and for this purpose they made little notches in the casing of the drawing-room door, showing his progress from month to month. This ladder was called "Poulet's ladder," and was an important affair.

A new individual began to play a part in the affairs of the household—the dog Massacre, who became Paul's inseparable companion.

Rare visits were exchanged with the Brisevilles and the Couteliers. The Mayor and the doctor alone were regular visitors. Since the episode of the mother dog, and the suspicion Jeanne had entertained of the priest on the occasion of the terrible death of the Countess and Julien, Jeanne had not entered the church, angry with a divinity that could tolerate such ministers.

The church was deserted, and the priest came to be looked on as a sorcerer because, so they said, he had driven out an evil spirit from a woman who was possessed: and, although fearing him, the peasants came to respect him for this occult power as well as for the unimpeachable austerity of his life.

When he met Jeanne, he never spoke. This condition of affairs distressed Aunt Lison, and when she was alone with Paul she talked to him about God, telling him the wonderful stories of the early history of the world. But when she told him that

he must love Him very much, the child would say: "Where is He, auntie?" "Up there," she would say, pointing to the sky. "Up there, Poulet, but do not say so." She was afraid of the Baron.

One day, however, Poulet said to her: "God is everywhere, but He is not in church." He had told his grandfather of his aunt's wonderful revelations.

When Paul was twelve years old, a great difficulty arose on the subject of his first communion.

Lison went to Jeanne one morning and told her that the little fellow should no longer be kept without religious instruction and from his religious duties. His mother, troubled and undecided, hesitated, saying that there was time enough. But a month later, as she was returning a call at the Brisevilles', the Countess asked her casually whether Paul would make his first communion that year. Jeanne, unprepared for this, answered: "Yes," and this simple word decided her; so, without saying a word to her father, she asked Aunt Lison to take the boy to the catechism class.

All went well for a month; but one day Paul came home with a hoarseness, and the following day he coughed. On inquiry his mother learned that the priest had sent him to wait till the lesson was over at the door of the church, where there was a draught, because he had misbehaved. So she kept him at home and taught him herself. But the Abbé Tolbiac, despite Aunt Lison's entreaties, refused to admit him as a communicant, on the ground that he was not thoroughly taught.

The same thing occurred the following year, and the Baron angrily swore that the child did not need to believe all that tomfoolery; so it was decided that he should be brought up as a Christian,

but not as an active Catholic, and when he should come of age he could believe as he pleased.

The Brisevilles ceased to call on Jeanne, and she was surprised, knowing the punctiliousness of these neighbors in returning calls; but the Marquise de Coutelier haughtily told her the reason. Considering herself, in virture of her husband's rank and fortune, a sort of queen of the Norman nobility, the Marquise ruled as a sovereign, said what she thought, was gracious or the reverse, as occasion demanded, admonishing, restoring to favor, congratulating, whenever she saw fit. So when Jeanne came to see her, this lady, after a few chilling remarks, said dryly: "Society is divided into two classes: those who believe in God and those who do not believe in Him. The former, even the humblest, are our friends, our equals; the latter are nothing to us."

Jeanne, perceiving the insinuation, replied: "But may not one believe in God without going to church?"

"No, Madame;" answered the Marquise. "The faithful go to worship God in His church, just as we go to see people in their homes."

Jeanne, hurt, replied: "God is everywhere, Madame. As for me, who believe from the bottom of my heart in His goodness, I no longer feel His presence when certain priests come between him and me."

The Marquise rose: "The priest is the standard-bearer of the Church, Madame; whoever does not follow the standard is opposed to Him and opposed to us."

Jeanne had risen in her turn, and said, trembling: "You believe, Madame, in a partisan God;

I believe in the God of upright people." She bowed and took her leave.

The peasants also blamed her among themselves for not having let Poulet make his first communion. They themselves never attended service or took the sacrament, unless it might be at Easter, according to the rule ordained by the Church; but for boys it was quite another thing; and they would have all shrunk in horror at the audacity of bringing up a child outside this recognized law, for religion is religion.

She saw how they felt and was indignant at heart at all these discriminations, all these compromises with conscience, this general fear of everything, the real cowardice of all hearts, and the mask of respectability assumed in public.

The Baron took charge of Paul's studies and made him study Latin, his mother merely saying: "Above all things, do not get overtired."

As soon as the boy was at liberty from his lessons, he went down to work in the garden with his mother and his aunt.

He now loved to dig in the ground, and all three planted young trees in the spring, sowed seed and watched it growing with the deepest interest, pruned branches, and cut flowers for bouquets.

Poulet was almost fifteen, but was a mere child in intelligence, ignorant, silly, suppressed between petticoat government and the kind old man who belonged to another century.

One evening the Baron spoke of college, and Jeanne at once began to sob. Aunt Lison remained timidly in a dark corner.

"Why does he need to know so much?" asked his mother. "We will make a gentleman farmer

of him. He can cultivate his land, as many of the nobility do. He will live and grow old happily in this house where we have lived before him and where we shall die. What more can one do? ''

But the Baron shook his head. '' What would you say to him if he should say to you when he is twenty-five: ' I amount to nothing, I know nothing, all through your fault, the fault of your maternal selfishness. I feel that I am incapable of working, of making something of myself, and yet I was not intended for a secluded, simple life, lonely enough to kill one, to which I have been condemned by your short-sighted affection.' ''

She was weeping, and said entreatingly: '' Tell me, Poulet, you will not reproach me for having loved you too well? '' And the big boy, in surprise, promised that he never would. '' Swear it! '' she said. '' Yes, mamma.''

'' You wish to stay here, don't you? ''

'' Yes, mamma.''

Then the Baron spoke up loud and decidedly: '' Jeanne, you have no right to make a disposition of this life. What you are doing is cowardly and almost criminal; you are sacrificing your child to your own private happiness.''

She hid her face in her hands, sobbing convulsively, and stammered out amid her tears: '' I have been so unhappy—so unhappy! Now, just as I am living peacefully with him, they want to take him away from me. What will become of me now—all by myself? ''

Her father rose, and, sitting down beside her, put his arms round her. '' And how about me, Jeanne? ''

She put her arms suddenly round his neck, gave

him a hearty kiss, and with her voice full of tears, she said: "Yes. You are right, perhaps—little father. I was foolish, but I have suffered so much. I am quite willing he should go to college."

And, without knowing exactly what they were to do with him, Poulet in his turn began to weep.

Then the three mothers began to kiss and pet and encourage him. When they retired to their rooms it was with a weight at their hearts, and they all wept, even the Baron, who had restrained himself until then.

It was decided that when the term should begin the boy should enter school at Havre. During the summer he was petted more than ever, his mother sighing often as she thought of the separation. She prepared his wardrobe as if he were about to undertake a ten years' voyage. One October morning after a sleepless night, the two women and the Baron entered the carriage with him and set out on their journey.

They had previously selected his place in the dormitory and his desk in the schoolroom. Jeanne, aided by Aunt Lison, spent the whole day in arranging his clothes in his little wardrobe. As it did not hold a quarter of what they had brought, she went to look for the superintendent to ask for another. The treasurer was called; but he pointed out that that amount of clothing would only be in the way and never would be needed; and he refused, in behalf of the directors, to let her have another chest of drawers. Jeanne, much annoyed, decided to hire a room in a small neighboring hotel, begging the proprietor to go himself and take Poulet whatever he required as soon as the boy asked for it.

They then took a walk on the pier to look at

the ships coming and going. They went into a restaurant to dine, but none of them was able to eat, and they looked at one another with moistened eyes as the dishes were brought on and taken away almost untouched.

They now returned slowly toward the school. Boys of all ages were arriving from all quarters, accompanied by their families, or by servants. Many of them were crying.

Jeanne held Poulet in a long embrace, while Aunt Lison remained in the background, her face hidden in her handkerchief. The Baron, however, who was becoming affected, cut short the parting by dragging his daughter away. They got into the carriage and went back through the darkness to The Poplars, the silence being broken by an occasional sob.

Jeanne wept all the following day, and on the day after drove to Havre in the phaeton. Poulet seemed to have become reconciled to the separation. For the first time in his life he had playmates, and in his anxiety to join them he could hardly sit still on his chair when his mother called. She continued her visits to him every other day, and called to take him home on Sundays. Not knowing what to do with herself while school was in session, until recreation time, she would remain sitting in the reception-room, having neither strength nor courage to go very far from the school. The superintendent sent to ask her to come to his office, and begged her not to come so frequently. She paid no attention to his request. He, therefore, informed her that if she continued to prevent her son from taking his recreation at the usual hours, obliging him to work without a change of occupation, they should be forced to send him home again; and the Baron was also

notified to the same effect. She was consequently watched like a prisoner at The Poplars.

She became restless and worried, and would ramble about for whole days in the country, accompanied only by Massacre, dreaming as she walked along. Sometimes she would remain seated for a whole afternoon looking out at the sea from the top of the cliff; at other times she would go down to Yport through the wood, going over the ground of her former walks, the memory of which haunted her. How long ago—how long ago it was—the time when she had gone over these same paths as a young girl, carried away by her dreams!

Poulet was not very industrious at school; he was kept two years in the fourth form. The third year's work was only tolerable, and he had to begin the second over again, so that he was still in rhetoric when he was twenty years old.

He was now a tall, fair young man, with a downy beard and a faint sign of a mustache. He went home every Sunday, riding over in two hours; his mother, Aunt Lison, and the Baron setting out early to meet him on the way.

Although he was a head taller than his mother, she always treated him as if he were a child; and when he returned to school in the evening she would charge him anxiously not to go too fast and to think of his poor mother, who would break her heart if anything should happen to him.

One Saturday morning she received a letter from Paul, saying that he would not be home on the following day because some friends had arranged an excursion and had invited him. She was tormented with anxiety all day Sunday, as if she dreaded some misfortune, and on Thursday, as she could en-

dure it no longer, she immediately set out for Havre.

He seemed to be changed, though she could not have told in what manner. He appeared excited, and his voice seemed deeper. And suddenly, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, he said: "I say, mother, as long as you have come to-day I wish to tell you that I shall not be at The Poplars next Sunday, for we are to have another excursion."

She was amazed, overcome, as if he had announced his departure for America. At last, recovering herself, she said "Oh, Poulet, what is the matter with you? Tell me what is going on."

He began to laugh, and, kissing her, replied: "Why, nothing, nothing, mamma. I am going to have a good time with my friends; I am just at the age for that, you know."

She had nothing to say, but when she was alone in the carriage all manner of ideas came into her mind. She no longer recognized him—her Poulet, her little Poulet of former days. She felt for the first time that he was grown up, that he no longer belonged to her, that he would live his life without troubling himself about the older people. It seemed to her that one day had wrought this change in him. Was it possible that this was her son, her poor little boy who had helped her to replant the lettuce, this great, big-bearded youth who had a will of his own!

For three months Paul came home only occasionally, and always seemed impatient to get away again, trying to steal off an hour earlier every evening. Jeanne was alarmed, but the Baron consoled her, saying: "Let him alone; the boy is twenty years old."

One morning, however, a poorly dressed old man

inquired in German-French for "Matame la Vicomtesse," and after many ceremonious bows he drew from his pocket a dilapidated pocketbook, saying: "*Che un betit bapier bour fous,*" and unfolding as he handed it to her a piece of greasy paper. She read and reread it, looked at the Jew, read it over again, and asked: "What does it mean?"

The man obsequiously explained: "I will tell you. Your son needed a little money, and as I knew that you are a good mother I lent him a trifle to help him out."

Jeanne was trembling. "But why did he not ask me?" The Jew explained at length that it was a question of a debt that must be paid before noon the following day; that as Paul was not of age, no one would have lent him anything, and that his "honor would have been compromised" without this little service that he had rendered the young man.

Jeanne tried to call the Baron, but had not the strength to rise, she was so overcome by emotion. At length she said to the usurer: "Would you have the kindness to ring the bell?"

He hesitated, fearing some trap, and then stammered: "If I am intruding, I will call again." She shook her head in the negative. He then rang, and they waited in silence, sitting opposite each other.

When the Baron came in he understood the situation at once. The note was for fifteen hundred francs. He paid one thousand, saying close to the man's face: "And on no account come back." The Jew thanked him and went his way.

The Baron and Jeanne set out at once for Havre. On reaching the school they learned that Paul had

not been there for a month. The principal had received four letters signed by Jeanne saying that his pupil was not well, and then telling how he was getting along. Each letter was accompanied by a doctor's certificate. The letters were, of course, all forged. They were all dumfounded, and stood looking at one another.

The principal, very much worried, took them to the commissary of police. Jeanne and her father stayed at a hotel that night. The following day the young man was found in the apartment of a courtesan of the town. His grandfather and mother took him back to The Poplars, and not a word was exchanged between them during the whole journey.

A week later they discovered that he had contracted fifteen thousand francs' worth of debts within the last three months. His creditors had not come forward at first, knowing that he would soon be of age.

They entered into no discussion about it, hoping to win him back by gentleness. They gave him dainty food, petted him, spoiled him. It was spring, and they hired a boat for him at Yport, in spite of Jeanne's fears, so that he might amuse himself on the water.

They would not let him have a horse, for fear he should ride to Havre.

Having nothing to do he became irritable, and occasionally brutally so. The Baron was worried at the discontinuance of his studies. Jeanne, distracted at the idea of a separation, asked herself what they could do with him.

One evening he did not come home. They learned that he had gone out in a boat with two sailors. His mother, beside herself with anxiety, went down to

Yport without a hat, in the dark. Some men were on the beach waiting for the boat to come in. There was a light on board an incoming boat, but Paul was not on board. He had made them take him to Havre.

The police sought him in vain; he could not be found. The woman with whom he had been found the first time had also disappeared without leaving any traces; her furniture was sold and her rent paid. In Paul's room at The Poplars were found two letters from this person, who seemed to be madly in love with him. She spoke of a voyage to England, having, she said, obtained the necessary funds.

The three dwellers in the château lived silently and drearily, their minds tortured by all kinds of suppositions. Jeanne's hair, which had become gray, now turned perfectly white. She asked in her innocence why fate had thus afflicted her.

She received a letter from the Abbé Tolbiac: "Madame, the hand of God is weighing heavily on you. You refused Him your child; He took him from you in his turn to cast him into the hands of a prostitute. Will not you open your eyes at this lesson from Heaven? God's mercy is infinite. Perhaps He may pardon you if you return and fall on your knees before Him. I am His humble servant; I will open to you the door of His dwelling when you come and knock at it."

She sat a long time with this letter on her lap. Perhaps it was true, what the priest said. And all her old religious doubts began to torment her conscience. In her cowardly hesitation, which drives to church the doubting, the sorrowful, she went furtively one evening at twilight to the parsonage, and,

kneeling at the feet of the thin priest, begged for absolution.

He promised her a conditional pardon, as God could not pour down all his favors on a roof that sheltered a man like the Baron. "You will soon feel the effects of the Divine mercy," he declared.

Two days later she did, indeed, receive a letter from her son, and in her discouragement and grief she looked upon this as the beginning of the consolation promised her by the priest. The letter ran:

"My Dear Mamma: Do not be uneasy. I am in London, in good health, in very great need of money. We have not a sou left, and some days we do not have anything to eat. The one who is with me, and whom I love with all my heart, has spent all that she had so as not to leave me—five thousand francs—and you see that I am bound on honor to return her this sum in the first place. So I wish you would be kind enough to advance me fifteen thousand francs of papa's fortune, for I shall soon be of age. This will help me out of very serious difficulties.

"Good-by, my dear mamma. I embrace you with all my heart, and also grandfather and Aunt Lison. I hope to see you soon. Your son,

"Vicomte Paul de Lamare."

He had written to her! He had not forgotten her. She did not care anything about his asking for money! She would send him some as long as he had none. What did money matter? He had written to her! And she ran, weeping for joy, to show this letter to the Baron. Aunt Lison was called, and read over word by word this paper that told of him. They discussed each sentence.

Jeanne, jumping from the most complete despair to a kind of intoxication of hope, took Paul's part. "He will come back, he will come back, as he has written."

The Baron, more calm, said: "All the same, he left us for that creature, so he must love her better than us, as he did not hesitate about it."

A sudden and frightful pang struck Jeanne's heart; and immediately she was filled with hatred of this woman who had stolen her son from her, an unappeasable, savage hate—the hatred of a jealous mother. Until now all her thoughts had been given to Paul. She hardly took into consideration that a girl had been the cause of his vagaries. But the Baron's words had suddenly brought before her this rival, had revealed her fatal power; and she felt that between herself and this woman a struggle was about to begin; she felt also that she would rather lose her son than share his affection with another. And all her joy was at an end.

They sent him the fifteen thousand francs, and heard nothing more from him for five months.

Then a business man came to settle the details of Julien's inheritance. Jeanne and the Baron handed over the accounts without any discussion, even giving up the interest that should come to his mother. When Paul came back to Paris he had a hundred and twenty thousand francs. He then wrote four letters in six months, giving his news in concise terms and ending the letters with coldly affectionate expressions. "I am working," he said; "I have obtained employment in the stock exchange. I hope to go and embrace you at The Poplars some day, my dear parents."

He did not mention his companion; and this silence implied more than if he had filled four pages with news of her. Jeanne, in these cold letters, felt this woman in ambush, the implacable, eternal enemy of mothers, the courtesan.

The three lonely beings discussed the best plan to follow in order to rescue Paul, but could decide on nothing. A journey to Paris? What good would it do?

"Let his passion exhaust itself. He will come back then of his own accord," said the Baron.

Some time passed without any further news. But one morning they were terrified at the receipt of a despairing letter.

"MY POOR MAMMA: I am lost. There is nothing left for me to do but to blow out my brains unless you come to my aid. A speculation that gave every prospect of success has fallen through, and I am eighty-five thousand francs in debt. I shall be dishonored if I do not pay up, ruined, and it will henceforth be impossible for me to do anything. I am lost. I repeat that I would rather blow out my brains than undergo this disgrace. I should have done so already, probably, but for the encouragement of a woman of whom I never speak to you, and who is my Providence.

"I embrace you from the bottom of my heart, my dear mamma, perhaps for the last time. Good-by PAUL."

A package of business papers accompanying the letter gave the details of the failure.

The Baron answered by return mail that they would see what could be done. Then he set out for Havre to seek advice, and he mortgaged some property to raise the money, which was sent to Paul.

The young man wrote three letters full of the most heartfelt thanks and passionate affection, saying he was coming home at once to see his dear parents.

But he did not come.

A whole year passed. Jeanne and the Baron were about to set out for Paris to try to make a last effort, when they received a line to say that he was in London again, setting an enterprise on foot

in connection with steamboats under the name of "Paul Delamare and Company." He wrote: "This will give me an assured fortune, and perhaps great wealth. And I am risking nothing. You can see at once what a splendid thing it is. When I see you again I shall have a fine station in society. There is nothing but business these days to help one out of difficulties."

Three months later the steamboat company failed, and the manager was being sought for on account of certain irregularities in business methods. Jeanne had a nervous attack that lasted several hours, and then she took to her bed.

The Baron again went to Havre, to make inquiries, saw some lawyers, some business men, some solicitors and bailiffs, and found that the liabilities of the Delamare concern were two hundred and thirty-five thousand francs, and he once more mortgaged some property. The château of The Poplars, and the two farms, and all that went with them, were mortgaged for a large sum.

One evening, as the Baron was arranging the final details of this matter in the office of a business man, he fell over on the floor with a stroke of apoplexy.

A man was sent on horseback to notify Jeanne; but when she arrived he was dead.

She took his body back to The Poplars, so overcome that her grief was numbness rather than despair.

Abbé Tolbiac refused to permit the body to be brought into the church, despite the distracted entreaties of the two women. The Baron was interred at twilight without any religious ceremony.

Paul learned of the event through one of the

men who were settling up his affairs. He was still in hiding in England. He wrote to make excuses for not having come home, saying that he had learned of his grandfather's death too late. "However, now that you have helped me out of my difficulties, my dear mamma, I shall go back to France, and I hope to embrace you soon."

Jeanne was so crushed in spirit that she appeared not to understand anything. Toward the end of the winter Aunt Lison, who was now sixty-eight, had an attack of bronchitis that developed into pneumonia, and she died quietly, murmuring with her last breath: "My poor little Jeanne, I will ask God to take pity on you."

Jeanne followed her to the grave, and as the earth fell on her coffin she sank to the ground, wishing that she might die also, so as not to suffer, to think. A strong peasant woman lifted her up and carried her away as if she had been a child.

When she reached the château, Jeanne, who had spent the last five nights at Aunt Lison's bedside, allowed herself to be put to bed without resistance by this unknown peasant woman, who handled her with gentleness and firmness, and she fell asleep from exhaustion, overcome with weariness and suffering.

She awoke about the middle of the night. A night light was burning on the mantelpiece. A woman was asleep in her easy-chair. Who was this woman? She did not recognize her, and leaning over the edge of her bed she sought to recognize her features by the dim light of the wick floating in oil in a tumbler of water.

It seemed to her that she had seen that face. But when? But where? The woman was sleeping

peacefully, her head leaning to one side and her cap on the floor. She might be about forty or forty-five. She was stout, with a high color, squarely built and powerful. Her large hands hung down at either side of the chair. Her hair was turning gray. Jeanne looked at her fixedly, her mind in the disturbed condition of one awaking from a feverish sleep after a great sorrow.

She had certainly seen that face! Was it in former days? Was it in recent years? She could not tell; and the idea distressed her, upset her nerves. She rose noiselessly to take another look at the sleeping woman, walking over to her on tiptoe. It was the woman who had lifted her up in the cemetery, and then put her to bed. She remembered this confusedly.

But had she met her elsewhere at some other time of her life? Or did she only imagine she recognized her amid the confused recollections of the day before. And how did she come to be there, in her room? And why?

The woman opened her eyes, and, seeing Jeanne, she rose to her feet suddenly. They stood face to face, so close that they touched one another. The stranger said crossly: "What! are you up? You will be ill, getting up at this time of night. Go back to bed!"

"Who are you?" asked Jeanne.

But the woman, opening her arms, picked her up and carried her back to her bed with the strength of a man. And as she laid her down gently and drew the covers over her, she leaned over close to Jeanne, and, weeping as she did so, she kissed her passionately on her cheeks, her hair, her eyes, the tears falling on her face, as she stammered out: "My

poor mistress, Mademoiselle Jeanne, my poor mistress, don't you recognize me? "

"Rosalie, my girl!" cried Jeanne, throwing her arms round her neck and hugging her as she kissed her, and they sobbed together, clasped in each other's arms.

Rosalie was the first to regain her calmness. "Come," she said, "you must be sensible and not catch cold." And she covered her up warm and straightened the pillow under her former mistress's head. The latter continued to sob, trembling all over at the recollections that were awakened in her mind. She finally inquired: "How did you come back, my poor girl? "

"*Pardi!* do you suppose I was going to leave you all alone like that, now? " replied Rosalie.

"Light a candle, so that I may see you," said Jeanne. And when the candle was brought to the bedside they looked at each other for some time without speaking a word. Then Jeanne, holding out her hand to her former maid, murmured: "I should not have recognized you, my girl; you have changed greatly—did you know it?—but not as much as I have." And Rosalie, looking at this white-haired woman, thin and faded, whom she had left a beautiful and fresh young matron, said: "That is true; you have changed, Madame Jeanne, and more than you should. But remember, however, that we have not seen each other for twenty-five years."

They were silent, thinking over the past. At length Jeanne said hesitatingly: "Have you been happy? "

Rosalie, fearful of awakening certain painful souvenirs, stammered out: "Why—yes—yes—Ma-

dame. I have nothing much to complain of, I have been happier than you have—that is sure. There was only one thing that always weighed on my heart, and that was, that I did not stay here. . . ."

She stopped suddenly, sorry she had referred to that unintentionally. But Jeanne replied gently: "How could you help it, my girl? One cannot always do as one wishes. You are a widow now, too, are you not?"

Then her voice trembled with emotion as she said: "Have you other—other children?"

"No, Madame."

"And he your—your boy—what has become of him? Has he turned out well?"

"Yes, Madame, he is a good boy and works industriously. He has been married for six months, and he can take my farm now, since I have come back to you."

Jeanne murmured in a trembling voice: "Then you never will leave me again, my girl?"

"No, indeed, Madame, I have arranged all that."

Jeanne, in spite of herself, began to compare their lives, but without any bitterness, for she was now resigned to the unjust cruelty of fate. "And your husband, how did he treat you?" she said.

"Oh, he was a good man, Madame, and not lazy; he knew how to make money. He died of consumption."

Then Jeanne, sitting up in bed, filled with a longing to know more, said: "Come, tell me everything, my girl, all about your life. It will do me good just now."

Rosalie, drawing up her chair, began to tell about herself, her home, her people, entering into those minute details dear to country people, describing

her yard, laughing at some old recollection that reminded her of good times she had had, and raising her voice by degrees like a farmer's wife accustomed to command. She ended by saying: "Oh, I am well off now. I don't have to worry." Then she became confused again, and said in a lower tone: "It is to you that I owe it, anyhow; and you know I do not want any wages. No, indeed! No, indeed! And if you will not have it so, I will go."

"You do not mean that you intend to serve me for nothing?" Jeanne replied.

"Oh, yes, indeed, Madame! Money! You give me money? Why, I have almost as much as you. Do you know what is left to you, with all your jumble of mortgages and borrowing, and interests unpaid, which are mounting up every year? Do you know? No, is it not so? Well, then, I can promise you that you have not even ten thousand francs' income. Not ten thousand, do you understand? But I will settle all that for you, and very quickly."

She had begun talking loud again, carried away in her indignation at these interests left unpaid, at this threatening ruin. And as a faint, tender smile passed over the face of her mistress, she cried in a tone of annoyance: "You must not laugh, Madame, for without money we are nothing but laborers."

Jeanne took her hands and kept them in her own; then she said slowly, still full of the idea that haunted her: "Oh, I have had no luck. Everything has gone against me. Fate has a grudge against my life."

But Rosalie shook her head: "You must not say that, Madame. You married badly, that's all. One should not marry like that, anyway, without

knowing anything about one's intended."

And they went on talking about themselves just as two old friends might have talked.

The sun rose while they were still speaking of the past.

CHAPTER XII

BROKEN LINKS

IN a week's time Rosalie had taken absolute control of everything and every one in the château. Jeanne was quite resigned and obeyed passively. Weak, and dragging her feet as she walked, as "little mother" had formerly done, she went out walking leaning on Rosalie's arm, the latter lecturing her and consoling her with abrupt and tender words as they paced slowly along, treating her mistress as if she were a sick child.

They always talked of bygone days, Jeanne with tears in her voice, and Rosalie in the quiet tone of a phlegmatic peasant. The servant kept referring to the subject of unpaid interests, and at last requested Jeanne to give up to her all the business papers, which Jeanne, in her ignorance of money matters, was hiding from her out of consideration for her son.

After that, for a week, Rosalie went into Fécamp

every day to have matters explained to her by a lawyer whom she knew.

One evening, after putting her mistress to bed, she sat down by the bedside and said abruptly: "Now that you are settled quietly, Madame, we will have a chat." And she told her exactly how matters stood.

When everything should be settled there would be about seven thousand francs of income left, no more.

"We cannot help it, my girl," said Jeanne. "I feel that I shall not live long, and there will be quite enough for me."

But Rosalie was annoyed: "For you, Madame, it might be; but Monsieur Paul, will you leave nothing for him?"

Jeanne shuddered: "I beg you not to mention him to me again. It hurts me too much to think about him."

"But I wish to speak about him, because, you see, you are not brave, Madame Jeanne. He does foolish things. Well, what of it? He will not do so always; and then he will marry and have children. He will need money to bring them up. Pay attention to me; you must sell The Poplars!"

Jeanne sprang up in a sitting posture: "Sell The Poplars! Do you mean it? Oh, never, never!"

But Rosalie was not disturbed. "I tell you that you will sell the place, Madame, because it must be done." And then she explained her calculations, her plans, her reasons.

Once they had sold The Poplars and the two farms belonging to it, to a buyer whom she had found, they would keep four farms situated at St. Léonard, which, free of all mortgage, would bring

an income of eight thousand three hundred francs. They would set aside thirteen hundred francs a year for repairs and for the maintenance of the property; there would then remain seven thousand francs, five thousand of which would cover the annual expenditure, leaving the other two thousand to be put away for a rainy day.

She added: "All the rest has been squandered; there is an end of it. And then I am to keep the key, you understand; as for Monsieur Paul, he will have nothing left, nothing; he would take your last sou from you."

Jeanne, who was weeping silently, murmured:

"But if he has nothing to eat?"

"He can come and eat with us if he is hungry. There will always be a bed and some stew for him. Do you believe he would have acted as he has if you had not given him a sou in the first place?"

"But he was in debt; he would have been disgraced."

"When you have nothing left, will that prevent him from making fresh debts? You have paid his debts, that is all right; but you will not pay any more. It is I who am telling you this. Now, good night, Madame."

And she left the room.

Jeanne did not sleep, she was so upset at the idea of selling The Poplars, of going away, of leaving this house, to which all her life was linked.

When Rosalie came into the room next morning she said to her: "My poor girl, I never could make up my mind to go away from here."

But the servant grew angry: "It will have to be, however, Madame; the lawyer will soon be here with the man who wants to buy the château. Other-

wise, in four years you will not have a sou left."

Jeanne was crushed, and repeated: "I could not do it; I never could."

An hour later the postman brought her a letter from Paul asking for ten thousand francs. What should she do? At her wits' end, she consulted Rosalie, who threw up her hands, exclaiming: "What was I telling you, Madame? Ah! You would have been in a nice fix, both of you, if I had not come back!" And Jeanne, bending to her servant's will, wrote as follows to the young man: "

"My Dear Son: I can do nothing more for you. You have ruined me; I am even obliged to sell The Poplars. But never forget that I shall always have a home whenever you wish to seek shelter with your old mother, to whom you have caused much suffering. Jeanne."

When the notary arrived with M. Jeoffrin, a retired sugar refiner, she received them herself, and invited them to look over the château.

A month later she signed a deed of sale, and also bought herself a little cottage in the neighborhood of Goderville, on the highroad to Montvilliers, in the hamlet of Batteville.

Then she walked up and down all alone until evening, in "little mother's" avenue, with a sore heart and a troubled mind, bidding distracted and sobbing farewells to the landscape, the trees, the rustic bench under the plane tree, to all those things she knew so well, which seemed to have become part of her vision and her soul—the grove, the mound overlooking the plain, where she had so often sat, and whence she had seen the Comte de Fourville running toward the sea on that terrible day of Julien's death; to an old elm tree, the upper branches

of which were missing, against which she had often leaned, and to all this familiar garden spot.

Rosalie came out and took her by the arm to make her come into the house.

A tall young peasant of twenty-five was waiting outside the door. He greeted her in a friendly manner, as if he had known her for some time: "Good morning, Madame Jeanne, I hope you are well? Mother told me to come and help you move. I should like to know what you wish to take away, seeing that I shall do it from time to time, so as not to interfere with my farm work."

It was her maid's son, Julien's son, Paul's brother!

She felt as if her heart had stopped beating, and yet she would have liked to embrace this young fellow.

She looked at him, trying to find some resemblance to her husband or to her son. He was ruddy, vigorous, with fair hair and his mother's blue eyes. And yet he looked like Julien. In what way? How? She could not have told, but there was something like him in the whole contour of his face.

The young man resumed: "If you could show me at once, I should be much obliged."

But she had not yet decided what she wished to take with her, as her new house was very small; and she begged him to come back again at the end of the week.

She was now entirely occupied with getting ready to move, which brought a little variety into her dreary and hopeless life. She went from room to room, picking out the furniture which recalled episodes in her life, old friends, as it were, who have a share in our life and almost of our being, whom

we have known since childhood, and to which are linked our happy or sad recollections, dates in our history; silent companions of our sad or somber hours, who have grown old and become worn at our side, their covers torn in places, their joints shaky, their color faded.

She selected them, one by one, sometimes hesitating and troubled as if she were taking some important step, changing her mind every instant, weighing the merits of two easy-chairs or of some old writing-desk and an old work-table.

She opened the drawers, sought to recall things; then, when she had said to herself: "Yes, I will take this," the article was taken down into the dining-room.

She wished to keep all the furniture of her own room, her bed, her tapestries, her clock, everything.

She took away some of the drawing-room chairs, those that she had loved as a little child; the fox and the stork, the fox and the crow, the ant and the grasshopper, and the melancholy heron.

Then, while wandering about in all the corners of this dwelling she was about to forsake, she went one day up into the loft, where she was filled with amazement; it was a chaos of articles of every kind, some broken, others only tarnished, others taken up there for no special reason probably, except that they were tired of them or that they had been replaced. She saw numberless knickknacks that she remembered, and that had disappeared suddenly, trifles that she had handled, those little old insignificant articles that she had seen every day without noticing, but which now, discovered in this loft, assumed an importance as of forgotten relics, of friends that she had found again.

She went from one to another with a little pang, saying: "Why, it was I who broke that china cup a few evenings before my wedding. Ah! there is mother's little lantern and a cane that little father broke in trying to open the gate when the wood was swollen with the rain."

There were also a number of things she did not remember that had belonged to her grandparents or to their parents, dusty things that appeared to be exiled in a period that was not their own, and that looked sad at their abandonment, and whose history, whose experiences no one knew, for they never saw those who chose them, bought them, owned them, and loved them; never knew the hand that had touched them familiarly and the eyes that looked at them with delight.

Jeanne examined carefully three-legged chairs to see whether they recalled any memories, a copper warming-pan, a damaged foot-stove that she thought she remembered, and a number of housekeeping utensils unfit for use.

She then put together all the things she wished to take, and going downstairs, sent Rosalie up to get them. The servant indignantly refused to bring down "that rubbish." But Jeanne, who had not much will left, held her own this time and had to be obeyed.

One morning the young farmer, Julien's son, Denis Lecocq, came with his wagon for the first load. Rosalie went back with him in order to superintend the unloading and placing of furniture where it was to stand.

Rosalie had come back and was waiting for Jeanne, who had been out on the cliff. She was enchanted with the new house, declaring it was much

more cheerful than this old box of a building, which was not even on the side of the road.

Jeanne wept all the evening.

Ever since they heard that the château was sold, the farmers were not more civil to her than necessary, calling her among themselves "the crazy woman," without knowing exactly why, but doubtless because they guessed with their animal instinct at her morbid and increasing sentimentality, at all the disturbance of her poor mind, which had undergone so much sorrow.

The night before they left she chanced to go into the stable. A growl made her start. It was Massacre, of whom she has hardly thought for months. Blind and paralyzed, having reached a great age for an animal, he existed on a straw bed, taken care of by Ludivine, who never forgot him. She took him in her arms, kissed him, and carried him into the house. As big as a barrel, he could hardly move along on his stiff legs, and he barked like the wooden dogs one gives to children.

The day of departure finally came. Jeanne had slept in Julien's old room, as hers was dismantled. She got up exhausted and short of breath, as if she had been running. The carriage containing the trunks and the rest of the furniture was in the yard, ready to start. Another two-wheeled vehicle was to take Jeanne and the servant. Old Simon and Ludivine were to stay until the arrival of a new proprietor, and then to go to some of their relatives, Jeanne having provided a little income for them. They had also saved up some money, and, being now very old and garrulous, they were not of much use in the house. Marius had long since married and left.

About eight o'clock it began to rain, a fine, icy

rain, driven by a light sea breeze. On the kitchen table some cups of coffee were steaming; Jeanne sat down and sipped hers, then, rising, she said: "Come along."

She put on her hat and shawl, and while Rosalie was putting on her overshoes, she said, in a choking voice: "Do you remember, my girl, how it rained when we left Rouen to come here?"

As she said this she put her two hands to her breast and fell over on her back, unconscious. She remained thus more than an hour, apparently dead. Then she opened her eyes and was seized with convulsions, accompanied by floods of tears.

When she was a little calmer she was so weak that she could not stand up, and Rosalie, fearing another attack if they delayed their departure, went to look for her son. They took her up, supported her to the carriage, and placed her on the wooden bench covered with leather; the old servant got in beside her, wrapped her up with a big cloak, and, holding an umbrella over her head, cried: "Quick, Denis! let us be off."

The young man climbed up beside his mother and whipped up the horse, whose jerky pace made the two women bounce about in the seat.

As they turned the corner to enter the village they saw some one stalking along the road; it was Abbé Tolbiac, who seemed to be watching for them to go by. He stopped to let the carriage pass. He was holding up his cassock with one hand, to keep it out of the mud, and his thin legs, incased in black stockings, ended in a pair of enormous muddy shoes.

Jeanne lowered her eyes so as not to meet his glance, and Rosalie, who had heard all about him, flew into a rage.

"Peasant! Peasant!" she murmured; and then, seizing her son's hand: "Give him a good slash with the whip."

But the young man, just as they were passing the priest, made the wheel of the wagon, which was going at full speed, sink into a rut, splashing the priest with mud from head to foot.

Rosalie was delighted, and turned round to shake her fist at him, while the priest was wiping off the mud with his big handkerchief.

Suddenly Jeanne exclaimed: "We have forgotten Massacre!" They stopped, and, getting down, Denis ran to fetch the dog, while Rosalie held the reins. He presently reappeared, carrying in his arms the shapeless and crippled animal, which he placed at the feet of the two women.

CHAPTER XIII

A WILD QUEST

TWO hours later the carriage stopped at a little brick house built in the middle of a lot planted with pear trees, at the side of the highroad.

Four trellised arbors, covered with honeysuckle and clematis, formed the four corners of the garden, which was divided into little beds of vegetables separated by narrow paths bordered with fruit trees.

A very high box hedge inclosed the whole property, which was separated by a field from the neighboring farm. There was a blacksmith's shop about a hundred feet farther along the road, but no other houses were within three-quarters of a mile.

The house commanded a view of the level district of Caux, covered with farms surrounded by their four double rows of tall trees, which inclosed the courtyard planted with apple trees.

As soon as they reached the house Jeanne wanted to rest; but Rosalie would not allow her to do so for fear she would begin to think of the past.

The carpenter from Goderville was there, and they began at once to place the furniture that had already arrived, while waiting for the last load. This required a good deal of thought and planning.

At the end of an hour the wagon appeared at the gate and had to be unloaded in the rain. When night fell the house was in utter disorder, with things piled up everywhere. Jeanne, tired out, fell asleep as soon as she got into bed.

She had no time to mourn for some days, as there was so much to be done. She even took a certain pleasure in making her new house look pretty, the thought that her son would come back there haunting her continually. The tapestries from her old room were hung in the dining-room, which had also to serve as a drawing-room; and she took special pains with one of the two rooms on the first floor which she thought of as "Poulet's room."

She kept the other bedroom herself, Rosalie sleeping above, next to the attic. The little house, furnished with care, was very pretty, and Jeanne was happy there at first, although she seemed to lack something, she did not know what.

One morning the lawyer's clerk from Fécamp brought her three thousand six hundred francs, the price of the furniture left at The Poplars and valued by an upholsterer. She felt a little thrill of pleasure at receiving this money, and as soon as the man had gone she ran to put on her hat, so as to reach Goderville as quickly as possible in order to send Paul this unexpected sum.

But as she was hurrying along the highroad she

met Rosalie coming from market. The servant suspected something, without at once guessing the facts; and when she discovered them—for Jeanne could hide nothing from her—she placed her basket on the ground that she might get angry with more comfort.

She began to scold with her fists on her hips; then, taking hold of her mistress with her right hand and lifting her basket with her left, and still fuming, she continued on her way to the house.

As soon as they were in the house the servant asked to have the money handed over to her. Jeanne gave all but six hundred francs, which she held back; but Rosalie soon saw through her tricks, and she was obliged to hand it all over. However, Rosalie consented that Jeanne should send this amount to the young man.

A few days later he wrote: "You have rendered me a great service, my dear mother, for we were in the deepest distress."

But Jeanne could not become accustomed to Batteville. It seemed to her as if she could not breathe as she did formerly, that she was more lonely, more deserted, more lost than ever. She set out for a walk, went as far as the hamlet of Verneuil, returned by the Trois-Mares, came home, then suddenly wished to set out again, as if she had forgotten to go to the very place she intended.

Every day she did the same thing without knowing why. But one evening a thought came to her unconsciously which revealed to her the secret of her restlessness. She said as she was sitting down to dinner: "Oh, how I long to behold the sea!"

That was what she had missed so greatly, the sea, her big neighbor for twenty-five years, the sea with

its salt air, its rages, its scolding voice, its strong breezes, the sea which she sought from her window at The Poplars every morning, whose air she breathed day and night, the sea which she felt close to her, which she had loved unconsciously as she would love a person.

Winter was approaching, and Jeanne felt herself overcome by an unconquerable discouragement. It was not one of those acute griefs which seem to wring the heart, but a dreary, mournful sadness.

Nothing roused her. No one paid any attention to her. The highroad before her door stretched to right and left with hardly any passers-by. Occasionally a dog-cart passed rapidly, driven by a red-faced man, with his blouse puffed out by the wind, making a sort of blue balloon; sometimes a slow-moving wagon, or else two peasants, a man and a woman, passed by and disappeared in the distance.

As soon as the grass began to grow again a young girl in a short skirt passed the gate every morning with two thin cows, which browsed along the side of the road. She came back every evening with the same sleepy face, making a step every ten minutes as she walked behind the animals.

Jeanne dreamed every night that she was still at The Poplars. She seemed to be there with her father and mother, and sometimes even with Aunt Lison. She did over again things forgotten and done with, thought she was supporting Madame Adelaide in her walk along the avenue. And every awakening was attended with tears.

She thought continually of Paul, wondering what he was doing—how he was—whether he sometimes thought of her. As she walked slowly in the by-roads between the farms, she pondered on all these

things that tormented her; but, above all else, she cherished an intense jealousy of the woman who had stolen her son from her. It was this hatred alone which prevented her from taking any steps, from going to look for him, to see him. It seemed to her that she saw that woman standing on the doorsill asking: "What do you want here, Madame?" Her mother's pride revolted at the possibility of such a meeting; and her haughty pride of a virtuous woman whose character is blameless made her all the more indignant at the cowardice of a man subjugated by an unworthy passion.

When autumn returned, with its long rains, its gray sky, its dark clouds, such a weariness of this kind of life came over her that she determined to make a great effort to get her Poulet back; he must have recovered from his infatuation by this time.

She wrote him an imploring letter.

"My Dear Child: I am going to entreat you to come back to me. Remember that I am old and delicate, all alone the whole year round, except for a servant-maid. I am now living in a little house on the main road. It is very lonely, but if you were here all would be different for me. I have only you in the world, and I have not seen you for seven years! You were my life, my dream, my only hope, my one love, and you failed me, you deserted me!

"Oh, come back, my little Poulet—come and embrace me. Come back to your old mother, who holds out her despairing arms toward you. Jeanne."

He replied a few days later:

"My Dear Mother: I would ask nothing better than to go to see you, but I have not a penny. Send me some money and I will come. I wished, in any case, to see you to talk to you about a plan that would make it possible for me to do as you ask.

"The disinterestedness and love of the one who has been my companion in the dark days through which I have passed never can be forgotten by me. It is not possible for me to remain any longer without publicly recognizing her love and her faithful devotion. She has very pleasing manners, which you would appreciate. She is also educated and reads a great deal. In fact, you cannot understand what she has been to me. I should be a brute if I did not show her my gratitude. I wish, therefore, to ask you to give me your permission to marry her. You will forgive all my follies and we will all live together in your new house.

"If you knew her you would at once give your consent. I can assure you that she is perfect and has much distinction of appearance. You will love her, I am sure. As for me, I could not live without her.

"I shall expect your reply with impatience, my dear mother, and we both embrace you with all our heart.

"Your son, VICOMTE PAUL DE LAMARE."

Jeanne was crushed. She remained motionless, the letter on her lap, seeing through the cunning of this girl who had had such a hold on her son for so long, and had not let him come to see her once, biding her time until the despairing old mother could no longer resist the desire to clasp her son in her arms, and would weaken and grant all they asked.

And grief at Paul's persistent preference for this creature wrung her heart. She said: "He does not love me! He does not love me!"

Rosalie just then entered the room. Jeanne faltered: "He wants to marry her now."

The maid was startled: "Oh, Madame, you will not allow that! Monsieur Paul must not pick up that rubbish."

Jeanne. overcome with emotion, but indignant, replied: "Never that, my girl. And, as he will not come here, I am going to see him myself, and we shall see which of us will carry the day."

She wrote at once to Paul to prepare him for her visit, and to arrange to meet him elsewhere than in the house inhabited by that baggage.

While awaiting a reply she made her preparations for departure. Rosalie began to pack her mistress's clothes in an old trunk, but as she was folding a dress, one of those she had worn in the country, she exclaimed: "Why, you have nothing to put on your back. I will not allow you to go like that. You would be a disgrace to every one; and the Parisian ladies would take you for a servant."

Jeanne let her have her own way, and the two women went together to Goderville to choose some material, which was given to a dressmaker in the village. They then went to the lawyer, M. Roussel, who spent a fortnight in the capital every year, in order to get some information. For Jeanne had not been in Paris for twenty-eight years.

He gave them much advice on how to avoid being run over, on methods of protecting one's self from thieves, advising Jeanne to sew her money up inside the lining of her coat, and to keep in her pocket only what she absolutely needed. He spoke at length about moderate-priced restaurants, mentioning two or three patronized by women, and told them that they might refer to him at the Hôtel Normandie.

Jeanne had never yet seen the railway, though trains had been running between Paris and Havre for six years and were revolutionizing the whole country.

She received no answer from Paul, although she waited a week, then two weeks, going every morning to meet the postman, asking him hesitatingly: "Is there anything for me, Père Malandain?"

And the man always replied in his hoarse voice: "Nothing again, my good lady."

It certainly must have been that woman who was keeping Paul from writing.

Jeanne, therefore, determined to set out at once. She wanted to take Rosalie with her, but the maid refused for fear of increasing the expense of the journey. She did not allow her mistress to take more than three hundred francs, saying: "If you need more you can write to me, and I will go to the lawyer and ask him to send it to you. If I give you any more, Monsieur Paul will put it in his pocket."

One December morning Denis Lecocq came for them in his light wagon and took them to the station. Jeanne wept as she kissed Rosalie good-by and got into the train. Rosalie also was affected, and said: "Good-by, Madame; *bon voyage,* and come back soon!"

"Good-by, my girl."

A whistle, and the train was off, beginning slowly and gradually going with a speed that terrified Jeanne. In her compartment were two gentlemen leaning back in the corners of the carriage.

She looked at the country as they swept past, the trees, the farms, the villages, feeling herself carried into a new life, into a new world that was no longer the life of her tranquil youth and of her present monotonous existence.

She reached Paris that evening. A *commissionnaire* took her trunk and she followed him in great fear, jostled by the crowd, and not knowing how to make her way amid this mass of moving humanity, almost running to keep up with the man for fear of losing sight of him.

On reaching the hotel she said at the desk: "I was recommended here by Monsieur Roussel."

The proprietress, a large woman with a serious face, who was seated at the desk, inquired:

"Who is he, Monsieur Roussel?"

Jeanne replied in amazement: "Why, he is the lawyer at Goderville, who stays here every year."

"That's very possible," said the big woman, "but I do not know him. Do you wish a room?"

"Yes, Madame."

A boy took her satchel and led the way upstairs. She felt a pang at her heart. Sitting down at a little table, she sent for some luncheon, as she had eaten nothing since daybreak. As she ate, she was thinking sadly of a thousand things, recalling her stay here on the return from her wedding journey, and the first indication of Julien's character betrayed while they were in Paris. But she was young then, and confident and brave. Now she felt old, embarrassed, even timid, weak and disturbed at trifles. When she had finished her luncheon she went over to the window and looked down on the street filled with people. She wished to go out, but was afraid to do so. She would surely get lost. She went to bed, but the noise, the feeling of being in a strange city, kept her awake. About two o'clock in the morning, just as she was dozing off, she heard a woman scream in an adjoining room; she sat up in bed, and then she thought she heard a man laugh. As daylight dawned the thought of Paul came to her, and she dressed herself before it was light.

Paul lived in the Rue du Sauvage, in the old part of the town. She wished to go there on foot, so as to carry out Rosalie's economical advice. The weather was delightful, the air was cold enough to

make her skin tingle. People were hurrying along the sidewalks. She walked as fast as she could, according to directions given her, along a street, at the end of which she was to turn to the right, and then to the left, where she would come to a square where she must make fresh inquiries. She did not find the square, and went into a baker's to ask her way, and he directed her differently. She set off again, went astray, inquired her way again, and finally got lost completely.

Half crazy, she now walked at random. She had made up her mind to call a cab when she caught sight of the Seine. She then walked along the quays.

After about an hour she found the Rue du Sauvage, a sort of dark alley. She stopped at a door, so overcome that she could not move.

He was there, in that house—Poulet.

She felt her knees and hands trembling; but at last she entered the door, and walking along a passage, saw the janitor's quarters. She said, as she held out a piece of money: "Would you go up and tell Monsieur Paul de Lamare that an old lady, a friend of his mother's, is downstairs, and wishes to see him."

"He does not live here any longer, Madame," replied the janitor.

A shudder went over her. She faltered:

"Oh! Where—where is he living now?"

"I do not know."

She grew dizzy, as if she were about to fall, and stood there for some moments without being able to speak. At length, with a great effort, she collected her senses and murmured:

"How long is it since he left?"

"About two weeks ago. They went off like that,

one evening, and never came back. They were in debt everywhere in the neighborhood, so you can understand that they did not care to leave their address."

Jeanne saw lights before her eyes, flashes of flame, as if a gun had been fired off in front of her eyes. But she had one fixed idea in her mind, and that sustained her and kept her outwardly calm and rational. She wished to find Poulet and know all about him.

"Then he said nothing when he was going away?"

"Nothing at all; they ran off to escape their debts, that's all."

"But he surely sends some one to get his mail."

"More frequently than I send it. He never got more than ten letters a year. I took one up to them, however, two days before they left."

That was probably her letter. She said abruptly: "Listen! I am his mother, his own mother, and I have come to look for him. Here are ten francs for you. If you can get any news or any particulars about him, come and see me at the Hôtel Normandie, Rue du Havre, and I will pay you well."

"You may count on me, Madame," he replied.

She left him and began to walk away without caring whither she went. She hurried along as if she were on some important business; knocking up against people with packages, crossing the streets without paying attention to the approaching vehicles, and being sworn at by the drivers, stumbling on the curb of the sidewalk, and tearing along straight ahead in utter despair.

Suddenly she found herself in a garden, and was

so tired that she sat down on a bench to rest. She stayed there some time apparently, weeping without being conscious of it, for passers-by stopped to look at her. Then she felt very cold, and rose to go on her way; but her legs would scarcely carry her, she was so weak and distressed.

She wanted to go into a restaurant and get a cup of bouillon, but a sort of shame, of fear, of modesty at her grief being observed, held her back. She would pause at the door, look in, see all the people sitting at table eating, and turn away, saying: "I will go into the next one." But she had not the courage.

Finally she went into a bakery, bought a roll and ate it as she walked along. She was very thirsty, but did not know where to go to get something to drink, so went without it.

Presently she found herself in another garden surrounded by arcades. She recognized the Palais Royal. Being tired and warm, she sat down there for an hour or two.

A crowd of people came in, a well-dressed crowd, chatting, smiling, bowing to each other, that happy crowd of beautiful women and wealthy men who live only for dress and amusement. Jeanne felt bewildered in the midst of this brilliant assemblage, and got up to make her escape. But suddenly the thought came to her that she might meet Paul in this place; and she began to wander about, looking into the faces, going and coming incessantly with her quick step from one end of the garden to the other.

People turned round to look at her, others laughed as they pointed her out. She noticed it and fled, thinking that they were doubtless amused at her appearance and at her dress of green plaid, se-

lected by Rosalie, and made according to her ideas by the dressmaker at Goderville.

She no longer dared even to ask her way of passers-by, but at last she ventured to do so, and found her way back to the hotel.

The following day she went to the police department to ask them to look for her son. They could promise her nothing, but said they would do all they could. She wandered about the streets, hoping that she might come across him. And she felt more alone in this bustling crowd, more lost, more wretched than in the lonely country.

That evening when she came back to the hotel she was informed that a man had come to see her from M. Paul, and that he would come back the following day. Her heart began to beat violently and she never closed her eyes that night. If it should be he! Yes, it assuredly was, although she would not have recognized him from the description they gave her.

About nine o'clock the following morning there was a knock at the door. She cried: "Come in!" ready to throw herself into certain outstretched arms. But an unknown person appeared; and while he excused himself for disturbing her, and explained his business, which was to collect a debt of Paul's, she felt the tears beginning to overflow, and wiped them away with her fingers before they fell on her cheeks.

He had learned of her arrival through the janitor of the Rue du Sauvage, and as he could not find the young man he had come to see his mother. He handed her a paper, which she took without knowing what she was doing, and read the figures—ninety francs, which she paid without a word.

She did not go out that day.

The next day other creditors came. She gave them all that she had left except twenty francs, and then wrote to Rosalie to explain matters to her.

She passed her days wandering about, waiting for Rosalie's answer, not knowing what to do, how to kill the melancholy, interminable hours, having no one to whom she could say an affectionate word, no one who knew her sorrow. She now longed to return home, to her little house at the side of the lonely highroad. A few days before she thought she could not live there, she was so overcome with grief, and now she felt that she could never live anywhere else but there where her serious character had been formed.

One evening a letter from home came, inclosing two hundred francs. Rosalie wrote:

"MADAME JEANNE: Come back at once, for I shall not send you any more. As for M. Paul, it is I who will go and get him when we know where he is.

"With respect, your servant, ROSALIE."

Jeanne set out for Batteville one very cold, snowy morning.

CHAPTER XIV

COMPENSATION

HARDLY going out now, never stirring about, Jeanne rose at the same hour every day, looked out at the weather, and then went downstairs and sat before the drawing-room fire. She would remain for days motionless, gazing into the fire, thinking of nothing in particular. It would grow dark before she stirred, except to put a fresh log on the fire. Rosalie would then bring in the lamp and exclaim: "Come, Madame Jeanne, you must stir about, or you will have no appetite again this evening."

She lived over the past, haunted by memories of her early life and her wedding journey down yonder in Corsica. Forgotten landscapes in that island now rose before her in the blaze of the fire, and she recalled all the little details, all the little incidents, the faces she had seen down there; the head of the

guide, Jean Ravoli, haunted her, and she sometimes seemed to hear his voice.

Then she remembered the sweet years of Paul's childhood, when they planted salad together, and when she knelt in the thick grass beside Aunt Lison, each trying what they could do to please the child, and her lips murmured: "Poulet, my little Poulet!" as if she were talking to him. Stopping at this word, she would try to trace it letter by letter in space sometimes for hours at a time until she became confused and mixed up the letters and formed other words, and she became so nervous that she was almost crazy.

She had all the peculiarities of those who live a solitary life. The least thing out of its usual place irritated her.

Rosalie often obliged her to walk and took her on the highroad; but at the end of twenty minutes she declared she could not take another step and sat down at the side of the road.

She soon became averse to all movement, and stayed in bed as late as possible. Since her childhood she had retained one custom, that of rising the instant she had drunk her coffee in the morning. But now she would lie down again and begin to dream; and, as she was daily growing more lazy, Rosalie would come and oblige her to get up, and almost force her to dress.

She seemed no longer to have any will power, and every time the maid asked her a question, or wanted her advice or opinion, she would say: "Do as you think best, my girl."

She imagined herself pursued by some persistent ill-luck and was like an Oriental fatalist; and, having seen her dreams all fade away and her hopes

crushed, she would sometimes hesitate a whole day or longer before undertaking the simplest thing, for fear she might be on the wrong road and it would turn out badly. She kept repeating: "Talk of bad luck—I have never had any luck in my life."

Then Rosalie would say: "What would you do if you had to work for your living, if you were obliged to get up every morning at six o'clock to go out to your work! Many people have to do that, nevertheless, and when they grow too old they die of want."

Jeanne replied: "Remember that I am all alone, that my son has deserted me." And Rosalie would get very angry. "That's another thing! Well, how about the sons who are drafted into the army? And those who go to America?"

America to her was an undefined country where one went to make a fortune and whence one never returned. She continued: "There always comes a time when people have to part, for old people and young people are not made to live together." And she added fiercely: "Well, what would you say if he were dead?"

Jeanne had nothing more to say.

One day in spring she had gone up to the attic to look for something, and by chance opened a box containing old calendars, which had been preserved after the manner of some country folks.

She took them up and carried them downstairs. They were of all sizes, and she laid them out on the table in the drawing-room in regular order. Suddenly she spied the earliest, the one she had brought with her to The Poplars. She gazed at it for some time, at the days crossed off by her the morning she left Rouen, the day after she left the convent, and

she wept slow, sorrowful tears, the tears of an old woman, at sight of her wretched life spread out before her on this table.

One morning the maid came into her room earlier than usual, and placing the bowl of coffee on the little stand beside her bed, she said: "Come, drink it quickly. Denis is waiting for us at the door. We are going to The Poplars, for I have something to attend to down there."

Jeanne dressed herself with trembling hands, almost fainting at the thought of seeing her dear home once more.

The sky was cloudless and the nag, which was inclined to be frisky, would suddenly start off at a gallop now and then. As they entered the Commune of Etouvent, Jeanne's heart beat so that she could hardly breathe.

They unharnessed the horse at the Couillard place; and while Rosalie and her son were attending to their own affairs the farmer and his wife offered to let Jeanne go over the château, as the proprietor was away and they had the keys.

She went off alone, and when she reached the side of the château from which there was a view of the sea she turned to look. Nothing had changed on the outside. When she turned the key in the heavy lock and went inside, the first thing she did was to go up to her old room, which she did not recognize, as it had been newly papered and furnished. But the view from the window was the same, and she stood and gazed out at the landscape she had so loved.

She then wandered over the house, walking quietly all alone in this abode, as silent as if it were a cemetery. All her life was buried here. She went

down to the drawing-room, which was dark with its closed shutters. As her eyes became accustomed to the dim light, she recognized some of the old hangings. Two easy-chairs were drawn up before the fire, as if some one had just left them; and as Jeanne stood there, full of old memories, she suddenly seemed to see her father and mother sitting there, warming their feet at the fire.

She started back in terror and knocked against the edge of the door on which she leaned to support herself, still staring at the armchairs.

The vision had vanished.

She remained bewildered for some minutes; then she slowly recovered her composure and turned to escape, for fear she might become insane. She chanced to look at the door against which she had been leaning, and saw there "Poulet's ladder."

All the little notches were there, showing the age and growth of her child. Here was the Baron's writing, then her own, a little smaller, and then Aunt Lison's rather shaky characters. And she seemed to see her boy of long ago, with his fair hair, standing before her, leaning his little forehead against the door while they measured his height.

She kissed the edge of the door in a frenzy of affection.

But some one was calling her outside. It was Rosalie's voice. "Madame Jeanne, Madame Jeanne, they are waiting breakfast for you."

She went out in a dream, and understood nothing of what they were saying to her. She ate what they gave her, heard them talking, but about what she knew not; she let them kiss her on the cheeks, and kissed them in return, and then got into the carriage.

When they lost sight of the château behind the tall trees, she felt a wrench at her heart, convinced that she had bid a last farewell to her old home.

When they reached Batteville, and just as she was going into her new house, she saw something white under the door. It was a letter that the postman had slipped under the door while she was out. She recognized Paul's writing and opened it, trembling with anxiety. He wrote:

"My Dear Mother: I have not written sooner because I did not wish you to make a useless journey to Paris when it was my place to go and see you. I am just now in great sorrow and in great straits. My wife is dying, after giving birth to a little girl three days ago, and I have not one sou. I do not know what to do with the child, whom my janitor's wife is bringing up on the bottle as well as she can, but I fear I shall lose her. Could you not take charge of it? I absolutely do not know what to do, and I have no money to put her out to nurse. Answer by return mail.

"Your son, who loves you, Paul."

Jeanne sank into a chair and had barely strength to call Rosalie. When the maid came into the room they read the letter over together, and then remained silent for some time face to face.

At last Rosalie said: "I am going to fetch the little one, Madame. We cannot leave it like that."

"Go, my girl," replied Jeanne.

Then they were silent until the maid said: "Put on your hat, Madame, and we will go to Goderville to see the lawyer. If she is going to die, the other one, Monsieur Paul, must marry her for the little one's sake, later."

Jeanne, without replying, put on her hat. A deep, inexpressible joy filled her heart, a treacherous joy that she sought to hide at any cost, one of those things of which one is ashamed, although cherishing

it in one's soul: Her son's sweetheart was about to die!

The lawyer gave the servant minute instructions, making her repeat them several times; then, sure that she could make no mistake, she said: "Do not be afraid; I will see to it now."

She set out for Paris that very night.

Jeanne passed two days in such a troubled condition that she could not think. The third morning she received merely a line from Rosalie saying she would be at home on the evening train. That was all.

About three o'clock she drove in a neighbor's light wagon to the station at Beuzeville to meet Rosalie.

She stood on the platform looking at the railway track as it disappeared on the horizon. She looked at the clock. Ten minutes still—five minutes still—two minutes more! Then the hour of the train's arrival, but it was not in sight. Presently, however, she saw a cloud of white smoke and gradually it drew up at the station. She looked anxiously, and at last perceived Rosalie carrying a sort of white bundle in her arms.

She tried to go over toward her, but her knees seemed to grow weak and she was afraid of falling.

But the maid had seen her and came forward with her usual calm manner, and said: "How do you do, Madame? Here I am back again, but not without some difficulty."

"Well?" faltered Jeanne.

"Well," answered Rosalie, "she died last night. They were married, and here is the little girl." And she held out the child, who could not be seen under her wraps.

Jeanne took it mechanically; they left the station and got into the carriage.

"Monsieur Paul will come as soon as the funeral is over—to-morrow about this time, I believe," returned Rosalie.

Jeanne murmured: "Paul——" and then was silent.

The wagon drove along rapidly, the peasant clacking his tongue to urge on the horse. Jeanne looked straight ahead of her into the clear sky through which the swallows darted in curves. Suddenly she felt a gentle warmth striking through to her skin; it was the warmth of the little being who was asleep on her lap.

Then she was overcome with an intense emotion, and uncovering gently the face of the sleeping infant, she raised it to her lips and kissed it passionately.

But Rosalie, happy, though grumpy, stopped her: "Come, come, Madame Jeanne, stop that; you will make it cry."

And then she added, probably in answer to her own thoughts: "Life, after all, is not as good or as bad as we believe it to be."